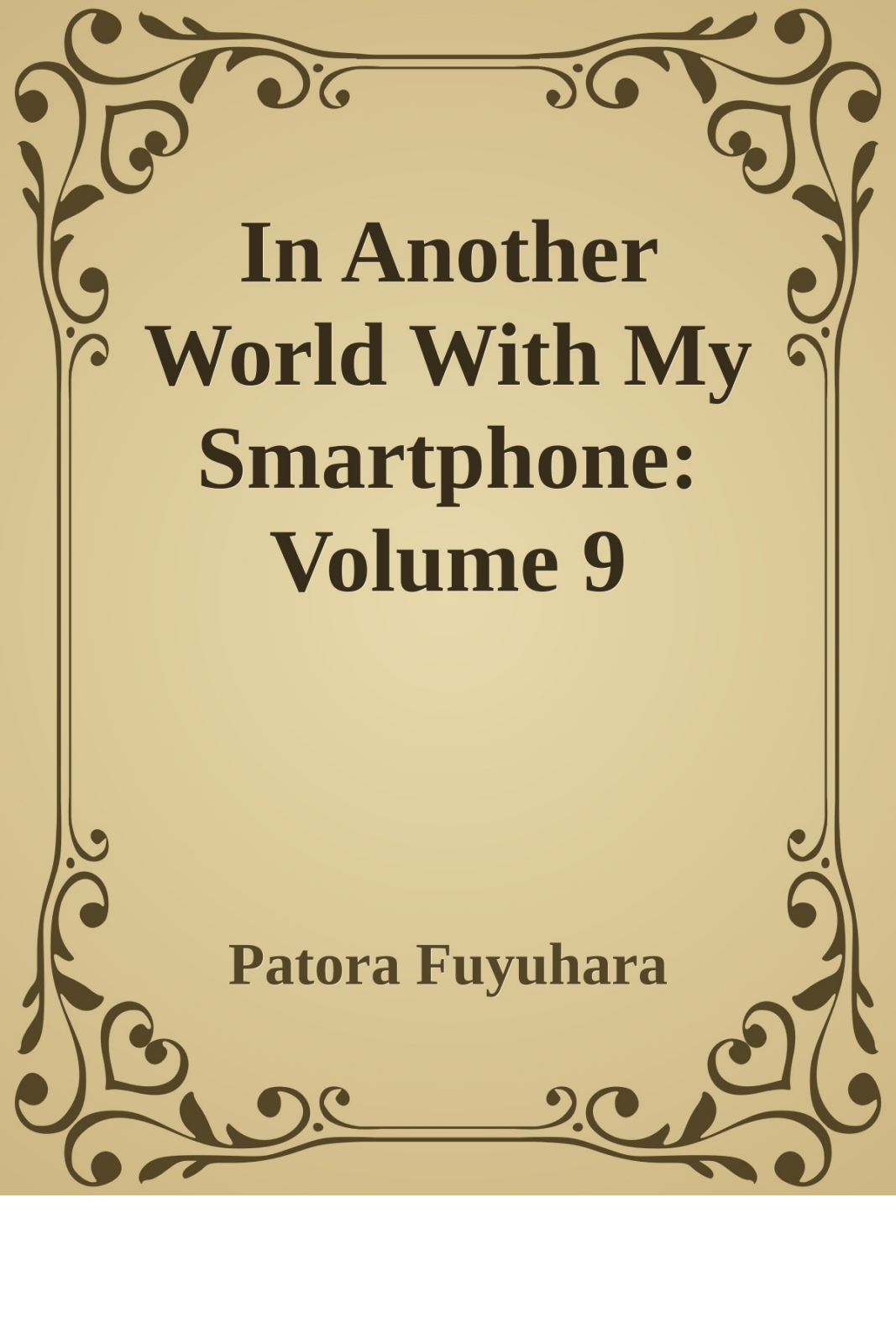


A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns, rendered in a dark brown color, framing the entire page.

In Another World With My Smartphone: Volume 9

Patora Fuyuhara

VISIT...

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In Another World With My Smartphone

Patora Fuyuhara

Illustration • Eiji Usatsuka

9



EXCUSE ME? UPPER CONSTRUCT? THERE'S ONE INCOMING?!

"W-WAIT A SEC...! JUST WHERE IS THIS DISTORTION?"

"RIGHT HERE, THAT MIGHT NOT BE THE EXACT LOCATION, BUT IT'S THE GENERAL AREA. IF YOU'VE GOT ANY FRIENDS THERE, I'D ADVISE THAT THEY GET OUT WHILE THEY CAN."

In Another World With My Smartphone 9



ELZE PILOTED GERHILDE AND RAN RIGHT
UP TO HER FOE, DRIVING A MAGICALLY-
REINFORCED PILE BUNKER INTO ITS SIDE.

IT TOOK ONLY A MOMENT. A DAZZLING FLASH OF LIGHT. MY BODY
LIT UP LIKE A CHRISTMAS TREE AS I WAS ENGULFED IN A SHINING
VORTEX. THE LIGHT REFLECTED OFF THE GOLDEN ROOM, CAUSING A
DAZZLING SHIMMER EVERYWHERE

"OOK-EEK!
TH-THAT
POWER! A-ARE
YOU FROM
THE REALM OF
THE GODS?!"



Character Profiles



Elze Silhoueska

One of Touya's fiancées.
The elder of the twin sisters saved by Touya some time ago. A ferocious melee fighter, she makes use of gauntlets in combat. Her personality is fairly to-the-point and blunt. She can make use of Null fortification magic, specifically the spell **[Boost]**. She loves spicy foods.



Yumina Urnea Belfast

One of Touya's fiancées.
Princess of the Belfast Kingdom. She was twelve years old in her initial appearance, and her eyes are heterochromatic. The right is blue, while the left is green. She has mystic eyes that can discern the true character of an individual. She has three magical aptitudes: Earth, Wind, and Darkness. She's also extremely proficient with a bow and arrow. She fell in love with Touya at first sight.



Mochizuki Touya

A highschooler who was accidentally murdered by God. He's a no-hassle kind of guy who likes to go with the flow. He's not very good at reading the atmosphere, and typically makes rash decisions that bite him in the ass. His mana pool is limitless, he can flawlessly make use of every magical element, and he can cast any Null spell that he wants. He's currently the Grand Duke of Brunhild.



Sushie Urnea Ortlinde

One of Touya's fiancées.
She was ten years old in her initial appearance. Her nickname is Sue. The niece of Belfast's king, and Yumina's cousin. Touya saved her from being attacked on the road. She has an innocently adventurous spirit.



Lucia Leah Regulus

One of Touya's fiancées.
The Third Princess of the Regulus Empire, she's Yumina's age. She fell in love with Touya when he saved her during a coup. She likes to fight with twin blades, and she's on good terms with Yumina.



Kokonoe Yae

One of Touya's fiancées.
A samurai girl from the far eastern land of Eashen, a country much like Japan. She tends to repeat herself and speak formally. She does. Yae is quite a glutton, eating more than most normal people would dare touch. She's a hard worker, but can sometimes slack off. Her family runs a dojo back in Eashen, and they take great pride in their craft. It's not obvious at first, but her boobs are pretty big.



Linze Silhoueska

One of Touya's fiancées.
The younger of the twin sisters saved by Touya some time ago. She wields magic, specifically from the schools of Light, Water, and Fire. She finds talking to people difficult due to her own shy nature, but she is known to be surprisingly bold at times. Rumors say she might be the kind of girl who enjoys male on male romance... She loves sweet foods.



Paula

A stuffed toy bear animated by years upon years of the **[Program]** spell. She's the result of two-hundred years of programmed commands, making her seem like a fully aware living being. Paula... Paula's the worst!



Sakura

A girl that Touya rescued in the Eashen mountains. She was on the verge of death when he found her. Her hair is a light pink, and her eyes are a faint purple. She has no memory of her personal life, and her emotional capacity seems to be quite low. Sakura isn't her real name, it's simply the name Touya gave her until she can remember her own. She's a wonderfully talented singer.



Leen

One of Touya's fiancées.
Former Clan Matriarch of the Fairies, she now serves as Brunhild's Court Magician. She claims to be six-hundred-and-twelve years old, but looks tremendously young. She can wield every magical element except Darkness, meaning her magical proficiency is that of a genius. Leen is a bit of a light-hearted bully.



Hildegard Minas Lestia

One of Touya's fiancées.
First Princess of the Knight Kingdom Lestia. Her swordplay talents earned her a reputation as a "Knight Princess." Touya saved her life when she was attacked by a group of Phases, and she's loved him ever since. She's a good friend of Yae, and she stammers a bit when flustered.



Luli

The fourth of Touya's summoned Heavenly Beasts. She is the Azure Monarch, the ruler of dragons. She often clashes with Kohaku due to her condescending personality.



Kougyoku

The third of Touya's summoned Heavenly Beasts. She is the Flame Monarch, ruler of feathered things. Though her appearance is flashy and extravagant, she's actually quite cool and collected.



Sango and Kokuyou

The second of Touya's summoned Heavenly Beasts. They are the Black Monarch, two in one. The rulers of scaled beasts. They can freely manipulate water. Sango is a tortoise, and Kokuyou is a snake. Sango is a female, and Kokuyou is a male (but he's very much a female at heart).



Kohaku

The first of Touya's summoned Heavenly Beasts. She's the White Monarch, the ruler of beasts, the guardian of the west and a beautiful White Tiger. She can create devastating shockwaves, and also change size at will.



High Rosetta

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Workshop, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Rosetta for short. Her Airframe Serial Number is #27. For whatever reason, she's the most reliable of the bunch.



Francesca

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Hanging Garden, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Cesca for short. Her Airframe Serial Number is #23. She likes to tell very inappropriate jokes.



Mochizuki Moroha

The God of Swords. Claims to be Touya's older sister. She trains the and advises the knights of Brunhild. She's gallant and brave, but also a bit of an airhead at times.



Mochizuki Karen

The God of Love. Claims to be Touya's older sister. She stays in Brunhild because she says she needs to catch a servile god, but doesn't really do all that much in the way of hunting him. She's a total pain in the butt.



Pamela Noel

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Tower, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Noel for short and wears a jersey. Her Airframe Serial Number is #25. She sleeps all the time, and eats laying down. Her tremendous laziness means she doesn't do all that much.



Prelora

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Rampart, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Liora for short and wears a blazer. Her Airframe Serial Number is #20. She's the oldest of the Babylon Gynoids, and would attend to the... Personal night time needs of Doctor Babylon herself. She has no experience with men.



Fredmonica

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Hangar, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Monica for short. Her Airframe Serial Number is #28. She's a funny little hard worker who has a bit of a casual streak. She's a good friend of Rosetta, and is the Gynoid with the most knowledge of the Frame Gears.



Bell Flora

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Alchemy Lab, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Flora for short and wears a nurse outfit. Her Airframe Serial Number is #21. A nurse with dangerously big boobs and even more dangerous medicines.



Ende

A strange monotone boy who wears a scarf. His strength is insane and beyond human comprehension. He's involved with the Phrase somehow, but the details are sparse...



God Almighty

The God of Worlds. He's the reason Touya was sent to this world to begin with. Despite the occasional mistake, he's quite a good person. He's actually a really, really good person... If you can call him a person at all.



Lileleparshe

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Storehouse, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Parshe for short and wears a shrine maiden outfit. Her Airframe Serial Number is #26. She's tremendously clumsy, even if she's just trying to help. The amount of stuff she ruins is troublingly high.



Irisfam

Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Library, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Fam for short and wears a school uniform. Her Airframe Serial Number is #24. She's a total book fanatic and hates being interrupted when she's reading.

Map of the World



The Story So Far!

Mochizuki Touya, wielding a smartphone customized by God himself, has made a name for himself in the new world. He is now Grand Duke of Brunhild, a nation formed of territory from both the Kingdom of Belfast and the Regulus Empire. Having rightfully inherited the ancient legacy of Babylon, Touya now commands a fleet of enormous humanoid mechs known as Frame Gears. Using his power, Touya has unified many nations of the world and created a collective defense force to repel the Phrase, monstrous invaders from another world. But still... North, East, South, and West... Trouble brews in all directions, and there are still many that have their eyes on his prize.

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Chapter I: The Roadmarian Rhapsody

“Amazing...! Moonbear liver can cure Permid’s Disease? A-And dried galara root is that potent of a salve?! Amazing!”

“Is it to your liking, then?”

“So much more than that! I can save so many lives with this knowledge! Thank you, Grand Duke!” Raul, Belfast’s royal physician, was looking over the medical journals I’d given him with stars in his eyes.

I’d transcribed several important books from the Library into the common language, and decided to give them to relevant experts. And so, I’d brought several medical journals from the ancient civilization to Raul. It seemed like they had a lot of techniques and remedies that had been lost to history. I personally saw it as nothing more than gibberish, but it looked like Raul was seriously impressed.

“Where did you find such incredible writing...?”

“Ah, well. You know those dungeons I opened up in Brunhild? I found it in a treasure chest. Then I used magic to translate it, that’s all.” I kept my mouth shut about the truth, naturally. Couldn’t risk anyone finding out about the Library.

I took a box of medicine out of **[Storage]** and passed it over to Raul. There was a lot of potent stuff inside, all made by Flora in the Alchemy Lab.

“Oh, take this too. It’s made by Brunhild’s medical staff. The effects are on this note, too.”

“Ah, thank you so much...”

“Don’t worry about it, I’d be upset if Prince Yamato ended up sick.” This world had plenty of recovery magic, but infant mortality was still a real threat. That was because recovery magic cured injuries, rather than diseases.

Doctors were needed for that. In the past I’d tried giving Raul a few items enchanted with **[Recovery]**, but it didn’t do much for sickness.

I tried curing Linze’s cold, but nothing happened. It didn’t help her menstrual cramps or motion sickness either. Plus, it didn’t seem to help people who were already passed out. I wondered about its effects on being hungover, but I hadn’t had a chance to test that.

“Touya, thanks for waiting...” Yumina opened the door and came in. I’d taken her with me to Belfast Castle because she wanted to check on her little brother. We made a habit of stopping by once a week.



I used the time to drop off some supplies with Raul. Didn't need to waste any time, after all.

"Don't you want to see Yamato, Touya?"

"Ah... I'm fine for today. Maybe next time." I said I was fine, but in truth I just didn't want to get caught by the King of Belfast. He'd talk to me for ages, and I'd end up having to sit around Prince Yamato for hours as well.

In all honesty, he was a little bit of a reckless parent. After all, he allowed Yumina to be with me just like that. I wondered if that old coot would be a good father to a little baby like Yamato... That reminded me that I couldn't remember the King's precise age, anyway. I thought he was around forty, but I couldn't remember so well. Still, I didn't want to be caught by the King. Before I spent any more time pondering, I opened up a **[Gate]** back home to Brunhild.

When I entered the castle, I was greeted by a flutter of wings. Kougyoku flew through the window.

"Hm, Kougyoku? Something up?" She immediately perched on my shoulder. I wondered if something had happened.

"Indeed. There appears to be a red Frame Gear on the western plains."

"Wait, what?" That could've only meant one thing. Ende's Dragoon. Still, I had no idea why he'd be here. I checked on my map and immediately opened up a **[Gate]**. Just as I'd expected, the Dragon Knight stood there in the field. Ende was there perched on its shoulder.

"Ende!"

"Yo, Touya. Been a while, huh? I figured you'd eventually get here if I showed up." Ende jumped down from the Dragoon's shoulder, his scarf fluttering gently in the wind as he moved. That guy always was light on his feet... Kind of like a cat, actually.

"What brings you here?"

"Ah well, the Dragon Knight stopped working all of a sudden. I was wondering if you might have something to help with that, Touya."

Stopped working...? Oh, the Ether Liquid must've run dry. It does burn out pretty fast if you use it a lot, after all. Even if it's not being used, it tends to wear out after about a month. It's like a soda. Eventually it's gonna lose carbonation regardless of whether or not you drink it.

*Still, he's had it for way more than a month... Maybe he's been storing it in that weird slide system of his. If it works anything like my **[Storage]**, then time wouldn't pass for anything inside.*

"Yeah, I can actually take this chance to remodel your Frame Gear if you'd like. That way it won't have to run on Ether Liquid anymore.

I'm sure you don't wanna have to drop by Brunhild every time you need a top up on fuel, after all."

"I'd appreciate that, then."

"It'll take about three days, is that fine?"

"Works for me. I'll take a look around your little duchy in the meantime."

Hmm... It'd be bad if he sticks around for too long. He's a good ally, and he's been invaluable in killing the Phrase, but...

I don't want him anywhere near the dungeon. He'll just blast through and clear the whole thing! That'd result in a net loss for my country's business.

"Anyways, three days sounds good to me. I'm relieved, since fighting an Upper Construct with just my fleshy body would be a real pain..."

".....Say what?" *Excuse me? Upper Construct? There's one incoming?!*

"Hey, what do you mean...?"

"I just happened to come across a spatial distortion, that's all. Given its state, I estimate it'll open up between seven to ten days from now. It won't be as many as that time in Yulong, though."

No, damn it! I'm not asking how many there'll be! You said there's an Upper Construct! Those things can wipe out cities in a single attack!

"W-Wait a sec...! Just where is this distortion?"

"Hm? Uh... east of here, I think? You got a map handy?" I fired up my map and displayed it in the air. Ende pointed out the location.

"Right here. That might not be the exact location, but it's the general area. If you've got any friends there, I'd advise that they get out while they can." I looked at the place Ende pointed. Fortunately, I had no friends in that particular part of the world.

"The Roadmare Union, huh...?" It was an allied state of seven city-states that existed east of Regulus. The area Ende had pointed at was just a little bit away from the capital city.

That was bad news... Even if it wasn't directly on the capital, the Upper Construct would be about as strong as the crocodile I'd fought in Yulong. If it decided to do a charged blast attack, we'd be completely screwed.

This was bad. Really bad. It'd absolutely cause widespread destruction. I wanted to destroy it as quickly and efficiently as possible, but that'd involve getting myself in another nation's business.

I considered giving them an advanced warning, but there was also the chance they wouldn't take me seriously. Then again, after what happened in Yulong I felt like they'd probably at least be able to hear me out about it.

“...It’s definitely coming?”

“Definitely.” He was pretty confident. The things Ende said had a habit of coming true eventually, so I had no reason to doubt him.

For now I’ll go talk to the King of Roadmare... Oh, wait. Actually, I think they have a doge? Either way, I’ll go speak to him.

I decided to ask the Emperor of Regulus to send a message... But then I remembered that Regulus and Roadmare weren’t on the best of terms. And so, I ended up finalizing on turning to the King of Lestia, or guildmaster Relisha. Both of them were quite well-connected.

Relisha seemed like the optimal first choice out of the two. There was a guild in Roadmare, after all. With any luck, we’d be able to get an evacuation before things turned sour like in Yulong.

If I told Relisha to spread the news, we’d at least be able to save local adventurers.

Either way, there was no time to lose. I opened up a [Gate] , sent the Dragoon to the Workshop, and then headed for the guild.

As soon as I informed Relisha of what was going on, she set to work. She contacted the guildmaster in Roadmare, and from there attempted to arrange a meeting with their state doge. Apparently he was a guy called Volk Ragil.

Thankfully, he agreed to meet us right away. The response was probably so fast since I was the head of a country, even if that country was small.

I took the King of Belfast and the Emperor of Regulus with me in order to represent the east-west alliance. Everything seemed fine, but...

“You’re not gonna evacuate?! But you saw what happened in Yulong, didn’t you?!”

“Well, it’s not quite so simple. We’ll take refuge, of course. But it’s best to wait for the situation to arise and judge it there and then.” The man sat in front of me on a comfortable-looking chair.

He had curled, chestnut hair. His face bore an expression that looked serious enough. His full beard helped accentuate his tone.

He wore an expensive looking coat. It matched the gaudy nature of the rest of his outfit.

This was Volk Ragil. He was the man that governed the central province of Roadmare, and acted as the doge of Roadmare on a whole.

Even though I told him about the impending Phrase threat, he didn’t seem to budge an inch. He reeked of self-confidence. I understood that he’d been elected as the sole ruler from seven candidates, but he had no idea what he was dealing with here.

“Let’s start with the basics... From where did this information come?”

“I can’t tell you the details exactly, but uh... A guy... I know, an

associate.”

“An... associate? Is he trustworthy? I don’t wish to be rude, but a story like this is a tad difficult to simply swallow.” Ende was definitely a shady guy. But the fact remained that he was an enemy of the Phrase. I wasn’t sure if it was a situation where I could say “the enemy of my enemy is my friend,” but I didn’t think he had any reason to be hostile toward us...

“I’ll be honest. The other members of my council have mixed opinions. Some say evacuation is the smartest choice, whilst others say there’s simply no need. I’ve even had it suggested that we deal with the threat ourselves by force. We can’t simply make a unanimous decision right away.” Typical politicians. They’d deliberate and squabble until death showed up right at their door. The lives of their people were at stake and they were only concerned with agreements. Just as my irritation began to well up, the Emperor of Regulus spoke up.

“You were saying you’d deal with the threat... but are you aware of how powerful the Phrase are?”

“The crystal creatures you call the Phrase have appeared within our territory before, yes. We’ve managed to exterminate them here and there. We can defeat them if push comes to shove, I’m sure of it.” I had heard rumors of Phrase sightings in Roadmare, but never followed up on it. If it was really true that they’d developed some effective countermeasure to the Phrase, then that’d be okay. I just had no idea what it could be.

“In fact... Let’s show you exactly how we’ve managed thus far. Right this way, please.” The doge smiled gently and guided us outside. Roadmare’s architecture was somewhat baroque, similar to the buildings in Russia’s St. Petersburg back in my old world. Roadmare’s culture seemed to be a combination of various smaller cultures, somewhat similar to the European culture that Peter the Great had established.

The doge, along with his guards, escorted us to a plaza behind the palace.

Then I saw what was standing there. I was taken by surprise, for sure. After all, I’d seen it before in another place.

“A Wood Golem...” Twice as big as a Frame Gear, a Golem born of bark and shrubbery. It was far larger than an ordinary Golem. It looked almost identical to the ones employed by the Rivet Tribe back in the Sea of Trees.

Though there was one notable difference. This Golem had sheets of metal fitted all over its body. It was like a giant armored warrior.

“What is a Wood Golem doing here?! Is that not dangerous?!”

“Fret not. This Golem is under our control. It won’t listen to

anyone but us, I assure you. There's no possible way this thing could run amok." Knight Commander Gaspar cried out in astonishment, but the doge reassured him and slapped his hand against the Golem's trunk.

The King of Belfast looked up at the Golem with a troubled expression on his face.

"Even so, this size... A standard Wood Golem shouldn't even reach ten meters. What in the world caused this?"

"It's a process that makes it into a Behemoth. It's thanks to selective breeding and special toxins. A tribe in the Sea of Trees perfected this method, I've seen it before."

"Oh my... Just as one would expect from the worldly grand duke of Brunhild... I see nothing gets past you, hm?" As I explained the situation to the King, someone called out to me.

I turned around and found myself face to face with a small, fat man. He looked about forty. His glasses almost slipped off his face, prompting him to nervously adjust them. He had a receding hairline and honestly didn't look very good at all. A stark contrast to the sheer confidence on his face.

"...Doge, who is this man?"

"Ah, this is Roadmare's foremost expert on magical engineering, Doctor Edgar Bowman. Despite his young age, he's quite the prodigy. He created the Golem you see here today."

...Young age? He doesn't look it.

"Sorry, I don't mean to sound rude, but... how old are you, exactly?"

"Me? I'll be turning twenty four this year. Is that important?"

Twenty four?! You've gotta be kidding me! I looked to the King and Emperor near me, and they looked completely caught off-guard by the doctor's proclamation. That was the natural response!

"If we're talking about this fellow's base, you're right. He's a similar type to the Wood Golems developed by that tribe. I acquired their methods through black market connections, then I built on them using my own techniques. We've outfitted them with enchanted mithril sheets. What enchantments, you might ask? Fire resistance! To top it all off, we fitted the saplings with subordination collars, ensuring that obedience is quite literally grown into them! The core is typically a weak spot, but fret not! We've carefully nurtured these to have extra defensive layers, as well. Even better, they can regenerate! And they're so low-maintenance that mass production is a trivial matter. There are dozens of Golems being outfitted with armor as we speak. If those Phrase things happen to land in Roadmare, then they'll be swiftly taken care of, I can assure you. Any questions?"

This Bowman guy is pissing me off... What's with that smug attitude?

You should've shut up minutes ago! I had a major problem with people who kept going on and on about stuff, regardless of whether or not they had a reason to be proud.

Still, my suspicions were confirmed, they were the same Golems used by the Rivet tribe. I didn't know how they fell into this guy's hands exactly, but it seemed like I'd left behind something troubling.

With great power came great stupidity, it seemed. Even if this thing had been modified, I questioned whether it'd actually be able to hold up against a Phrase in combat.

It might have made a decent match for a Lesser Construct, but anything higher than that? No way. A Wood Golem wouldn't be able to avoid the beam attacks used by stronger constructs like the Manta Phrase.

"You mentioned magical engineering... Does that mean you work with artifacts?"

"I do, I do! I've based most of my work on the legacy of ancient Partheno. I'm actually blessed to have a book by a famous inventor named Deborah Elks. I've learned much from her writing. It's what made these Golems possible as well."

"Deborah Elks, huh..." She was the craftswoman who had created the dragon-controlling needle used by that Dragon King guy. If I recalled properly, Doctor Babylon said her work was mediocre. But I couldn't ignore that this Bowman guy had been creating stuff based on her writings.

"I've actually been wondering if these giant warriors of yours are Professor Elks' creation as well. After all, she was a true genius. Rarely does such a grand creation come about without prodigal intervention."

"Nope, not her. My Frame Gears are based on the work of Doctor Regina Babylon."

"Doctor... Babylon? I've never heard that name before. Is she recorded in any books?"

"Ah... W-Well, I'll just keep that to myself for now." Bowman looked at me with a small frown. I almost let too much slip. It seemed like he was an avid fan of the shoddy professor.

"Well, Doge... Are these Golems truly capable of defending against a Phrase invasion? I witnessed the Yulong massacre with my own eyes. I would not want hubris to lead to Roadmare's collapse." The Emperor raised a concern, to which the doge of Roadmare grunted in annoyance. However, the one to speak up in indignation ended up being Bowman.

"How very dare you? Emperor, these Golems are the fruits of my labor. Who are you to suggest they cannot stand against the Phrase hordes? Forgive me if this is rude, but it seems to me you're simply

incapable of understanding just how mighty they are. They exceed even the power of Brunhild's giant warriors, I'll have you know..."

"You little...!" Gaspar instinctively brought his hand to his scabbard, but the Emperor shot him a look that caused him to calm down. The doge was quick to step in and diffuse the tension.

"Mister Bowman, please hold your tongue in esteemed company. My apologies. His tone was inexcusable, Emperor. However, I would like to raise my own matter of concern. Is there something wrong with these Golems?" His tone was kind, but his eyes seemed like they had a goading manner to them. That reminded me, Roadmare and Regulus historically held bad blood between them. It was said that Roadmare was established when multiple territories declared independence from Regulus. That happened around two-hundred years before I arrived in this world. They probably held some animosity toward one another as a result.

"How shall I put this, dear doge... I wonder if your wooden puppets will truly be up to scratch when it comes to protecting your people. They're not being piloted by anyone, after all. They lack the human touch."

"Aha... Then you mean to say Brunhild's giant warriors are superior to my Golems?"

Huh? W-Wait a minute... Don't you get hostile too, Emperor! I can understand where you're coming from, but still...

The Bowman guy seemed to be impossibly smug when it came to his Golems. He didn't seem to have much social sense, either. He was glaring right at the Emperor of Regulus. He had to be stupid. Nobody in their right mind would look at a monarch like that.

Gaspar was staring at him with intensity in his eyes. Naturally he wouldn't forgive him for speaking to his leader that way. The Roadmare guardsmen were silently staring at the Regulus guardsmen. The atmosphere had suddenly gotten a whole lot more tense. It was all that Golem freak's fault! He couldn't read the atmosphere at all.

He probably had his ego massaged every day by the people of Roadmare, which meant he had an inflated sense of importance.

In all honesty, this guy was far from a genius. He'd just taken the Golems from the Rivet Tribe and the collars from Sandora, then mixed in a few other things. You could barely call it his own work, since he just cobbled together a bunch of other ideas.

"Touya, my lad. Here's a thought... Why don't we show them the power of the Frame Gears?"

"...You think that's a good idea?" The King of Belfast muttered toward me, keeping a keen eye on the two sets of tense guards. I replied in turn.

"Can't really be worse than what's happening now. It'd be better

to fix their naive understanding of the Phrase, no?" He raised a fair point. They were definitely sure of their Golem's strength, but there'd no doubt be fatalities if they ended up taking that route.

I decided I'd teach them once and for all just how pathetic their secret weapon truly was.

"[Gate]." I opened up a portal, allowing my most basic of Frame Gears, a Chevalier, to fall through.

It landed in the plaza with a noisy thud.

The sudden appearance of the "giant warrior" caused the Roadmarians to look on in shock.

"This is a Chevalier. It's the type of Frame Gear that I mass produce. It's the weakest Frame Gear in my country, and the only positive it has over other Frame Gears is how easy it is to control."

"What..." All the Roadmarians looked up at it. The Wood Golem was definitely larger, but that was about it. Either way, from appearances alone it did seem like the Golems could punch a Frame Gear into the stratosphere. I wondered if they felt the same. I noticed Bowman grin slightly out of the corner of my eye. *What's so funny?*

"I propose a mock battle between my Frame Gear and your Golem. We'll accept that as proof of the Golem's capabilities in combating the Phrase menace. Is that fair, Doge?"

"Goodness me... I don't mind at all! What about you, Mister Bowman?"

"Most interesting... Yes, I'd quite like to see a Frame Gear in action. I approve." Bowman sneered slightly as he adjusted his glasses. Then, before walking away, he whispered to the guardsmen.

The mock battle was scheduled for ten minutes later. Bowman and the doge spoke quietly while I turned to Nikola.

"Alright, let's prepare... Are you good to pilot, Nikola?"

"That I am. More than good, in fact." Vice-Commander Nikola had come along as my escort, and I had full confidence in his ability to win. As I was thinking about the details, I heard a sudden voice.

"Grand Duke, might I have the honor of piloting the Chevalier?"

"Gaspar?" Knight Commander Gaspar walked over to me. His eyes had a piercing level of intimidation behind them.

"A mere puppet could never make a mockery of me. On the pride of my Emperor, I swear it to you. I will win." The other knights of Regulus were looking my way as well. It seemed that they couldn't stomach how Bowman had disrespected their leader.

I glanced to the Emperor of Regulus, and he gave me a little nod of affirmation. Gaspar was pretty damn strong, so I had no issues with letting him pilot. It wasn't like the pilot actually had to be from Brunhild or anything. Plus, he was from an allied state, so it was more about the power of the Frame Gear itself than my country.

“Sounds fine to me. If you think you can, go for it. You want a spear?”

“Aye. I’d appreciate it.” I opened up another portal to the Hangar, and a Frame Gear-sized spear came out.

I took the initiative and told Gaspar the location of the Wood Golem’s core, and also gave him a basic rundown on its strengths and weaknesses. It seemed fair, given that he’d be fighting a souped-up version of the ones you’d find in the wild.

The time came to begin. I looked over at Bowman, and he had a shit-eating grin on his face as he watched Gaspar board the Frame Gear.

I made sure to keep an eye on his face. The moment it shifted to a look of despair would be priceless.



“What is this?! What the hell is this?!” Bowman was sweating bullets as he screamed. All he could do was watch as the Chevalier nimbly evaded all of the Golem’s attacks and slowly shaved away at the creature’s arms.

The Frame Gear managed to slice faster than the Golem could regenerate its lost biomass, cleaving the left forearm right off.

The Golem was terrible. It was slow. It was dumb. It had considerably less strength than I expected it to have. In some ways it actually felt like its natural strength had been reduced due to the modifications.

The Golem glowed a faint red about the throat as its regeneration speed increased a bit. It didn’t take long for both arms to fully restore themselves, but it couldn’t regrow the armor plating, so it was considerably more vulnerable.

It started to lash out again with its reformed arms, but it couldn’t lay a single strike on the Chevalier.

“Guh! H-Hit it! Just land a hit...!”

“Hm? Think that’ll make a difference? Heh, let’s see, then.”

“Wha—?!” As I smirked over at Bowman, the Chevalier was promptly smacked by the Wood Golem. But it wasn’t as he would’ve have wanted.

The Chevalier tanked the hit and brought its spear up, piercing the throat of the Golem. Gaspar had cleverly ascertained the location of the core thanks to the red glow earlier, and the spear was more than strong enough to break through.

The Golem’s core was annihilated, making the lumbering beast fall to the ground with a thud. It crumbled to pieces, sending flakes of dying bark scattering around the area.

Bowman fell to his knees in shock, unable to process what was

happening.

“I-Impossible... M-My masterpiece...” A masterpiece, he called it. I was really glad we’d held this mock battle. One of those Golems would be ripped to shreds in seconds if it went all-in against the Phrase. It’d lose to a swarm of Lesser Constructs easily, and anything higher than that would be able to take it one-on-one without a hitch.

“Doge. A single Intermediate Phrase is strong enough to give multiple Chevaliers a hard time. There’ll also be countless numbers of them, and I haven’t even mentioned the Upper Constructs which have an even more obscene amount of strength. Those things will soon be making landfall in Roadmare. For the sake of your people, I’d suggest a mass evacuation.”

“G-Goodness... I-I’ll discuss it with the other heads of state... We’ll let you know our decision once we’ve reached it.”

“We look forward to hearing from you, Doge.” Bowman was glaring at the floor in shock, and the Doge seemed pretty surprised too. We turned from them and walked over to Gaspar.

“Perhaps I overdid it a tad...”

“No, you did well. The citizens’ lives were at stake. We can’t have them take it too lightly. They had better reconsider the evacuation now.” An evacuation was necessary, but it wouldn’t be simple. There was even the chance that the citizens wouldn’t believe the news. Plus, they’d have to leave their life-long homes.

Obviously we’d aim to keep collateral damage to a minimum, but if a town ended up becoming a battlefield then it likely wouldn’t survive the fallout. Intermediate and Upper Constructs would cause considerable damage with their beam attacks, too.

Phrase wouldn’t specifically target deserted towns, but they’d definitely end up trampling any buildings that ended up in their way. Their wild march would mean the end of any buildings on their warpath.

It wasn’t just houses, either. Stores, fields, and other sources of livelihood would be devastated. It was easy enough to tell someone they should be thankful for getting away with their life, but they’d still be throwing away everything they’d built.

I transferred the Frame Gear back to the Hangar, then started thinking that we should probably take our leave when two women approached us.

One of them was a gray-haired woman who looked to be about forty years old. She wore a shawl and seemed fairly serene. The other was a tall, knightly woman with brown hair. She looked about twenty.

“A pleasure to meet you. Grand Duke of Brunhild, Emperor of Regulus, and King of Belfast, allow me to introduce myself. I am the governor of the Roadmare Union’s Highland State, Audrey Leliban.

And this is the commander of the highland knights, Limit Limitex.”

“...Uh, hi...” I was so caught off-guard that my reply ended up coming off as less than sincere.

Highland... That's one of the seven states that make up Roadmare, I think. If she's the governor there, then that means she's actually pretty important!

“I’ve come to ask something of you, if possible. May I borrow your ear for a time?”

“Uh, sure! Yeah. What’s up?”

“I would like for you to tell me precisely where these Phrase will appear. And then I would like to know their anticipated movements.” I projected my map in the air to show Audrey. The two of them seemed surprised at the sudden display, but I ignored that. I pointed out the location Ende had shown me earlier.

“Right here. It might not be this precise area, but the Phrase should pop out around here in a week or so.”

“Oh goodness...”

“Lady Governor...!”

Hm? Something funny about the map? What's going on?

“...Forgive my sudden shock. It’s true this area is located in the central state, but it’s particularly close to the highlands. Grand Duke, if the Phrase appear here, what will they do?”

“Well, that’s simple enough. The Phrase hunt down any intelligent creature with a heartbeat. If they appear here, they’ll go straight for any nearby populated areas. So... they’ll probably head here first.” I zoomed the map out to show more of Roadmare. The Phrase would emerge in the central state, but the nearest village was actually within the highlands. In other words, her territory would come under fire first.

“Ah... Here. Rimroad town. They’ll likely head right there.”

“Just as we’d suspected...” Audrey let out a deep sigh. That was only natural. Her people were going to be attacked if nothing was done.

“And if we evacuate the citizens of Rimroad? Will that change the Phrase’s course?”

“In that case the Phrase will head straight for Emynas in the highlands, or Recept in the central state. I can’t be certain though, since the marker here isn’t completely precise.”

“I see... And your alliance intends to fight the emerging Phrase? What is it you’re looking for, exactly? What will it cost?”

“It’ll cost nothing. I’m not interested in asking you people for stuff. If we don’t do all we can, then the world will collapse in a similar manner to the ancient civilizations of yore. We didn’t manage to save Yulong, but this time we have the edge of foresight. I’d like to

reduce damage to an absolute minimum this time.” I nodded firmly as I spoke to Governor Audrey. I didn’t want to invade Roadmare, or ask them for anything. They really had no option but to believe my intentions were benign.

If the Phrase rampaged here, there’d be nothing left after a while. If I didn’t care about the people or the world, I’d have kept quiet. After all, it was the business of another nation. However, I couldn’t just sit by while so many perished.

I decided that if Roadmare’s government didn’t call for an evacuation, then I’d at least give the citizens the choice by telling them the truth. They’d be able to choose whether or not they stayed or left. It could well result in mass panic, but I had to at least give them a fighting chance.

I wasn’t about to let selfish governmental decisions result in the deaths of innocents.

“...Very well, then. The highlands will independently evacuate. I don’t have permission from the doge yet, but we will leave even if he says not to. I will also freely allow your alliance access to our land for this battle. That is the decision I’ve come to.”

“Lady Governor... Is that really okay? Depending on the doge’s choice, you may end up rebelling against him.” Limit seemed nervous as she spoke to Audrey. She had a right to be, since Audrey’s proposition would have her opposing Roadmare’s government. A deed like that could end up having long term consequences.

“If we delay, we won’t be able to arrange an evacuation in time. We can’t sit around any longer and wait. The doge will make his decision, but it won’t affect our course of action. I will take full responsibility.”

“Oh, hold on. If you give me your permission to try something, I think I could evacuate you all really fast. I can use my transportation magic...” I came up with an idea. I’d open up a **[Gate]** and let the citizens spend a couple of days in a safe space. And then...

“Well... I could probably move every town.”

“What?!” The King of Belfast, the Emperor of Regulus, and the governor of the Roadmare Highlands all yelled out in surprise.

I’d never tried a large-scale portal before. The biggest thing I’d ever moved was the castle that Ripple lived in.

Instead of transporting the town directly, I’d transport the town and the terrain it was on. Otherwise I’d have to move the buildings somewhere with identical ground.

It was a matter of precarious balance. A bowl of soup on a tray is fine, but if you suddenly move that tray halfway off the edge of a stair, it’d flip over easily. I just needed to move the town to a safe place and maintain the balance properly. It’d be bad if I moved the

town along with the people and something went wrong, though. I decided to just have them evacuate for the meantime. After that I'd move the town to a safe location if possible, but I didn't want to get their hopes up.

Plus, the Phrase's path would change if the humans in the area were relocated, so I might not even have to move some places.

Either way, the primary focus was to make the place uninhabited. If just one stubborn person stayed behind, the Phrase would lock on to his heartbeat and damage the town. It was important that people understood that.

"Moving people forcibly won't be an issue if it comes down to it. Just how big is this battle expected to be?"

"Smaller than the battle at Yulong, at least... It shouldn't be as devastating, either. I'm just glad we managed to talk to you guys before the invasion ended up happening." There weren't any excuses for failure this time. We had time to prepare. No point in squandering it.

I decided to have Audrey talk to her citizens in the meantime. I could easily transfer them last-minute, but it would be better to have them out of the way sooner rather than later. Then it would only be a matter of me using magic to sense people in the vicinity, and we'd be golden.

All we needed to do after that was continue producing new Frame Gears. We'd only be able to create Elze's Frame Gear and repair Ende's Dragoon before the battle, though.

If a flying Phrase showed up like the manta, I'd have no choice but to bring it down. It meant that, once again, I wouldn't be fighting in a Frame Gear. That totally sucked! I started thinking about making a flying Frame Gear or something.

Maybe I could create one that can fly with a pack or something... One that can swap out parts to deal with various situations.

Well, I won't be able to make one in time for the upcoming fight anyway, but I can at least ask Rosetta about the idea.



We returned from Roadmare and immediately began a meeting of the allied nations.

Even though we'd settled on a rough outline of what was going on in Roadmare, we still needed to run it by the other leaders.

"Has Lestia gotten used to using the Frame Unit simulations yet?"

"We have. I can safely say that all of our knights can use the simulation with a degree of proficiency. Whether or not they'll manage in real combat remains to be seen, however." The newly-crowned King of Lestia gave me a little smile as he replied. Just as it

was last time, I believed that once a person had a degree of control over a Frame Unit, they were capable of operating a Frame Gear properly.

Either way, our alliance consisted of eight nations. Brunhild, Belfast, Regulus, Refreese, Mismede, Ramissh, Lihnea, and Lestia.

The Frame Gears I'd be supplying to them wouldn't be new models, since that honor was currently only held by Elze, but I had confidence we'd be able to make do.

"Similar to last time, I'll be lending out twenty Frame Gears to each nation. Each will have two Knight Barons and eighteen Chevaliers. Make sure you've selected your commanders and pilots properly beforehand. Brunhild will have sixty Frame Gears, making two-hundred in total." It was about ten units less than the Yulong invasion. I was still confident we'd be able to manage with that amount. The only worry on my mind was what kind of Upper Construct would show up. It'd be extremely bad if an airborne one showed up... I had no choice but to pray for good fortune.

"Still... first Yulong, now Roadmare. The situation's slowly becoming more troubling, if you ask me." The beastking brought his fingers together as he heaved a sigh. He leaned back in his seat, but I could sense the anxiety. It was an anxiety present in every leader in the vicinity. They were all wondering just when the Phrase would appear in their homes as well.

"Hey, Touya... Is there not some kind of device that could predict when future Phrase invasions will occur?" The Emperor of Refreese spoke up. He had a point to be concerned. Even if I gave Frame Gears to every nation, it'd be too late to deal with the crisis without knowing well in advance where they'd appear. That being said, there was no way I could just give out Frame Gears recklessly.

"Will the fellow who told you about the invasion to begin with continue aiding us?"

"Hmph... It's a little difficult to say. He's a bit of a wanderer. He's not against us, but he's not really an ally either."

"I... see..." It'd be bad if we became dependent on Ende. I wondered if there was some kind of detection artifact in the storehouse. I decided to check later.

"Have we heard anything from Roadmare recently, then?"

"We still haven't received their formal permission, no. The governor of the highlands has given me her tentative permission to act in her area, but that's it. In a worst-case scenario, us intruding on the central province might be seen as an act of aggression or war."

"It's entirely possible that they want that, you know? If we go in and clear it up, they could formally state that they could've handled it themselves and we were recklessly intruding on their affairs."

“I doubt they’ll do something so brash or stupid. If we left them alone, they’d suffer terrible damage. Still, if they keep stalling, then the Phrase will end up appearing regardless...” It ultimately came down to whether or not they believed us. I’d be happy if it was just senseless prattling from Ende, but that’d also cause trouble because I went in completely confident that the Phrase were coming. If other nations lost their confidence in Brunhild, that’d be a major issue.

I wouldn’t be too bothered if people just called me a liar, but it would hardly end there.

After the meeting was adjourned, I headed to the Silver Moon to meet Ende. I took him over toward the western plains to see his newly-renovated Dragoon.

“Whoa! You changed the color, too? Red was pretty sweet, but I totally love this...” His new Dragoon had been changed from bright red to a calm black and white.

In truth, I’d actually taken the chance to change the color because Elze’s new Frame Gear was red, and I didn’t want them to get mixed up.

Plus, this one matched Ende’s image a lot more... Though the two-tone coloring kind of made me think of an emergency service vehicle. I recalled an anime with a police mecha with a similar coloration, actually...

“You no longer need to refuel it, since it’ll take magic directly from you. If you leave it for a few days, it’ll stay stable by taking in magic from the air. Last of all, nobody but you has permission to pilot it, so it simply won’t function with another in control.”

“I already said I’m not sharing, don’t worry. I really like this thing, anyway.” It wasn’t like I didn’t trust him. I understood loving giant robots. I’d also attached proper comms equipment to his Frame Gear, meaning as long as he was within range I’d be able to radio for him. Then again, if he kept the Dragoon inside one of his glass slide storage devices, it wouldn’t mean much.

“Oh, by the way, do you have any more of that voice stuff you let me use during the last invasion?”

“Well, I do have some left, but... I can’t just go handing them out all the time.”

“Oh, I see...” I’d hoped to use the same strategy I’d used back in Yulong, but it seemed like he was being extra-generous back then. I was disappointed, but I understood.

“Oh, another thing. How come you can predict when the Phrase are coming, Ende? Is there some kind of telltale sign?”

“Kinda. It was mostly good luck this time, honestly. First, I can sense the subtle warps in space. Then, I can use my senses to determine how many days it’ll take until the warping becomes

cracking, and then an opening. After that, there's the 'Noise.' Every Phrase resonates on a unique wavelength so they can tell each other apart. The sound crosses the boundary of space, so I can hear it from this side. Using that, I can tell how many are waiting, and what types as well. To a certain extent, anyway. Even though I called it a noise, humans can't hear it."

A warp in space and a wavelength, huh...? If we can get a tool to detect these things, then we might be able to make proper predictions. But still, if humans can't hear it and he can... just what does that make Ende...?

As I mused to myself, Ende boarded his Dragoon and got ready to speed off.

"Well, I've a few things to attend to. I'll come back in a few days to help with the Phrase. Later, Touya."

"Got it. Thanks a lot, Ende." The hatch closed and the Dragoon switched to high-speed mode. Dust was kicked up behind it as it zoomed away.

"Now... All I have to do is set up countermeasures against the Upper Construct. I wonder if I can do something about the laser beam... The last one had one, so I assume this one will too." *Even if there's a magic that can be used against it, I really hope I don't have to stand in front of a blast like that..*

[Shield] and [Absorb] had too narrow a range to be effective, and I didn't even know if the beam attack was magic-based to begin with.

I headed off to the Library in search of more Null spells. I found a few books on the subject, but they were all unbelievably thick. I couldn't afford to waste too much time sitting around with books, so I skimmed the pages and memorized a few choice selections.

Null Magic existed five-thousand years ago, after all. That meant there was an insane amount of spells to cover. Especially since there were stupid minor spells that could do stuff like make people feel itchy or make drinks taste slightly worse than they did before.

That being said, it was all in how you used the magic. [Slip] could be considered a basic prank spell, but I'd used it very effectively.

I ended up holing up in the Library for about half a day. I wasn't sure if the spells I'd found would prove useful, so I simply had to wait and see. As I did that, Fam just read books at her own leisure. It wouldn't have hurt her to try and help me out a little!

I left the Library and went over to see Monica and Rosetta at the Workshop. The minibots were scuttling around and working hard as ever.

I peeked into the garage to find a skeletal Frame Gear base being

lifted around by a crane hook. Rosetta and Monica both seemed concerned about something.

“Something wrong, you two?”

“It’s Lady Elze’s Frame Gear, sir! Its primary weapons are fists for efficient CQC, but...”

“It’s like, totally boring and stuff to just punch and punch... I am of the humble opinion that a special, flashier attack may be in order.”

Hm... Monica has a point. Elze’s Frame Gear is built for fistfights, but that’s a little dull. I do agree that attacking a little flashier, maybe crushing the foe in one hit before moving on to the next, could be a little more up Elze’s alley in terms of fighting style.

“Crushing a Phrase in one hit is fine, sir! But you need to follow that strike up with a second to obliterate the core, yes sir!”

“Yeah, like... If a sword or spear is being used you can totally just do all that in one hit, and stuff.” I understood what they were saying. Weapons like hammers can take out enemies in a single strike. They had more diversity than fists. We needed a way to take out the core of the enemy in a single blow.

“Well, sir! If you’ll see my proposition here, I think it could be possible to launch something alongside the fist to target the core, sir!” Rosetta threw out her fist in a punching motion as she spoke.

“So we could maybe install something like a spear into the forearm?”

“I am of the humble opinion that would be a good idea. But wouldn’t it like, get in the way during regular punches and stuff? We should totally make it retractable or something.” *Hmm... A spear you can store in the arm and then shoot out at will...? Oh, wait... I know!*

I pulled out my Smartphone and searched online. *Yeah... This is the one, I think.* I projected the image into the air.

“Here. A pile bunker.”

“Wow, that’s huge, sir! What is it, though?” Neither Rosetta nor Monica could read my native language, so I gave a rough summary while cutting out some details. They wouldn’t understand if I spoke about anime or games from my old world, after all.

“So it’s a weapon that shoots out a sharpened point at high speeds...?”

“Yeah. Elze can break the main armor with her punch, then hit the vital point using the pile bunker. Do you think we could make a compact version and fit it on to the wrists?”

“This is most curious... We like, don’t have enough gunpowder for it to be reusable, so we’d have to rely on magic to operate it and stuff... It’ll totally cover the back of the hand as well as the wrist. But if we like, make it out of Phrasium or whatever, it’ll be super duper strong. I believe it may be somewhat difficult to construct.” I didn’t

really mind it covering the wrist and hand, since it'd be mostly crystal anyway. Plus, we wouldn't be wasting any resources. It'd be way better than using Phrasium for bullets or projectiles that we couldn't recover.

"Still, sir! This is a pretty crazy weapon! Where'd you get the idea?"

"Ah, well... Don't worry about it..."

"Tsk..." I hadn't actually told anyone that I was from another world. Her Holiness the Pope and Phyllis knew about God Almighty, but nothing beyond that.

I also had to weigh whether or not people would believe me. I began thinking that I probably should've told Yumina, Elze, and the others... Probably the Babylon Gynoids, too.

Hmph... Even aside from my fiancées and the Babylon girls, there are a few people who should know. I should probably organize a sit-down and tell them the truth soon.

"Alright! We're gonna totally make this pile bunker thing and stuff! Gather round, peeps!" Monica started barking orders to the various minibots. They listened to her explanation and gave little nods every now and then.

"This weapon's gonna be savage as heck, sir!"

"Sounds fine by me. After all, the pile bunker is just another part of the manly dream."

"Manly...? Lady Elze is a woman, sir!"

Gah! Damn it... That's true. Thus, Elze's Crimson Frame Gear was finally born. I named it Gerhilde, after one of the Valkyries of Norse myth.



"How's it feel?"

"It's a little unbalanced, but it's not doing much to hinder movement. It's way easier to move than the Black Knight." Elze was piloting Gerhilde, her new Frame Gear.

Gerhilde's armor was coated in Phrasium. I decided against making the entire Frame Gear out of the stuff, because she would've been inside a transparent mecha, and it would've been hard for her allies to see her. I tried to paint over it before, but it was awkward and didn't really work well with **[Modeling]** either. The paint just kinda meshed with the material and looked gross. **[Modeling]** was a transformation spell, not a fusing one, after all. Though I felt like it might've worked better if the paint was made out of the same material as the base.

Either way, Gerhilde was a multi-layered armored titan. Its deep crimson was clearly visible beneath the Phrasium sheen on top of the

base armor.

“Haaah!” Gerhilde smashed a huge rock cliff, crumbling it to pieces in an instant. At the same time, the pile bunker flew out from just above the wrist, shattering it further.

Right after smashing one of the loose rocks, the pile bunker neatly slid back into its holster.

“Yup, pile bunker’s good too. It shoots out wherever I aim. I could probably trash an intermediate construct in one go with this thing.” A certain phrase popped up in my mind as I looked at Gerhilde. Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee. This was a Frame Gear designed for instant kills. Gerhilde was a force to be reckoned with for sure. Naturally, it was far beyond even the Knight Barons when it came to speed and power.

“**[Boost]!**” Magic overflowed from the seams of Gerhilde’s multi-layer armor, appearing like a red light. It almost looked like a big crimson aircraft getting ready for takeoff.

Gerhilde was imbued with fortification magic and got even faster. It hastily obliterated what remained of the rocky wall.

“Well? How’s it handle?”

“It’s taking up a ton of my magic and stamina... Probably because it’s coating the whole thing, not just me. It might be hard to use a lot of magic in here.” Overall, it seemed like it was performing up to my projected standards. Elze deactivated her spell, and Gerhilde’s red light faded.

“Master, sir! I’ve finished gathering data.” Rosetta called my line. She’d been monitoring the situation from Babylon. The whole point of this trial run was to gather data on Gerhilde. So now, all that was left was to make a few last minute adjustments.

“Alright, all done. Thanks a million, Elze.” Gerhilde’s hatch opened up and Elze popped out.

“There we go, Elze. Yours is the first of the new Frame Gears.”

“Who are you making Frame Gears for next?”

“First and foremost, I want to prioritize battle-oriented Frame Gears. Yae and Hilde are probably next. They’re both proficient with swords, and they have similar styles.” Yae excelled at offensive tactics, while Hilde really stood out with defensive play. Gerhilde ended up being pretty tricky to fine-tune, but those two wouldn’t be hard to make Frame Gears for at all.

As I thought about what to design, a telepathic message came in from Kougyoku.

《My liege. We’ve a message from the governor of the highlands from Roadmare.》

《Oh? What’s up? Did the central province finally give us permission to deploy?》

《No, she needs our help. We've been informed that the central province is in turmoil. Various armored Wood Golems have been seen rampaging in the area...》

《Wait, what?!》 *Armored Golems? Like the ones made by that creepy Bowman guy...?! Why the hell are they rampaging?! More importantly, why today?! The Phrase are due to arrive en masse tomorrow!*
I frantically sent Gerhilde back up to the Hangar and headed back to my castle.

I'd given a Gate Mirror to Audrey in case of emergencies, and I was certainly thankful for that decision at this point. Even if it only allowed letters through, it was still real-time communication.

From what I'd been told, a number of Golems were rampaging in the central province. The reason behind the attack wasn't known, though.

"We need to get going, now. Elze, you feeling up to taking Gerhilde out for a real battle?"

"Sounds good to me! The enemies are just armored versions of those chumps from the Pruning, right? Piece of cake." She seemed confident, which was good to hear. Elze and I hurried toward the central province's capital to get a closer look.

"Oh lord..." The beautiful baroque-styled buildings were in pieces. People were running and screaming in all directions.

There were fires all over the place, accompanied by black plumes of smoke. Several massive Golems were roaming around, swinging their fists at everything in their path. It was kind of like an old-fashioned monster movie in action.

"Can't you send them somewhere else?!"

"Where else?! They'd wreak havoc no matter where I sent them!"
I shot down Elze's suggestion. Obviously I couldn't send them to Brunhild. I could've sent them to the ocean, but I had a feeling that wouldn't kill them. I didn't want to lose track of any, either. A volcano wouldn't be a bad idea, though.

Regardless, I couldn't let the rampage continue. I decided to send them to some nearby plains. I didn't want the town getting any more trashed.

I took out my smartphone to run a search. There were twelve in total. A full dozen of the bastards. I moved them all to the plains immediately. The Golems vanished in an instant, razing the city no more.

That would buy us enough time, at least. It was a simple matter of going to the plains and smashing them to bits.

"Your Highness! G-Grand Duke!" I turned around to address the sudden voice, and found Audrey running toward me down the palace steps. Limit, her knight, wasn't far behind.

“Governor, just what is happening here? Why are the Golems going nuts?”

“We lost control of them. Doctor Bowman was frustrated that your Frame Gears were better than what he had, so he made some unauthorized and reckless modifications. But in doing so, he drove them berserk! They’re completely wild!”

What the hell was that idiot thinking?! Holy hell, why did he do that?!

“Where’s Bowman now?”

“No one knows. The Doge is looking all over for him, but I fear he died during the initial outbreak.” I pulled out my smartphone map and looked for Bowman. Dead or alive didn’t matter much to me. A red pin fell down on the map, pointing out his location. I wondered where it was, exactly.

“He’s right here. Seems he’s alive.”

“Why this is... an old storehouse! What is he doing there...? G-Gah! For now... Limit, go and arrest him!”

“Yes, ma’am!” Limit and her knights charged off in the direction of Bowman’s location.

The Golems had vanished, which meant the city was calming down a little bit, but the fires were still raging.

“Descend, O Water. Blessing of the Heavens: [Heavenly Rain]!” My magic called up to the sky and rain began to fall despite the lack of clouds up there. It was another ancient spell I’d learned in the Library. I cast **[Shield]** atop my head to act as a makeshift umbrella. With that, the fires would surely die out in no time.

All of a sudden it started raining really heavily. I’d overdone it a bit! It was my first time using that spell, so I’d misjudged how much magic was required. By the time I’d stopped the rain, it was flooding in some areas.

Oh geez... A-At least I managed to stop it in time!

“Th-There you go... N-No more fire! Now all we need to do is recover the injured. I’ll go and take care of the Golems in the meantime.”

“Ah... Y-Yes. Very well. Please be careful.” Governor Audrey waved us off as we headed to the plains. The group of Golems were there, already advancing toward civilization once again. They were stomping pretty loudly, too.

I got a closer look and noticed there was something strange on their backs. I couldn’t really see it properly from the front, but it seemed plant-like... Like something had been fused to them. It was probably Bowman’s final modification. I opened up a **[Gate]** and summoned Gerhilde from the Hangar. The crimson Frame Gear set foot upon Roadmare’s territory with a terrifying thud.

“You gonna be alright?”

“No problem. This is just the right amount of enemies. I’ll turn them into splinters.” Elze grinned, ran up the Frame Gear’s side, popped open the hatch, and climbed into the cockpit.

I’d installed an automatic eject magic in case of emergencies, so I wasn’t too worried.

Gerhilde began spinning up. I could tell because of the whirring noise that filled the air.

“Let’s kick some ass, Gerhilde!” Gerhilde turned toward a group off three Golems and, with a loud sputtering noise, engaged its thrusters. The backdraft kicked up a whole cloud of dust into the air.

Hey! I’m here, y’know?! Blegh, it’s in my mouth!

“Take this!” Gerhilde jumped into the air and pulled back its fist, sending a punch into one of the Golem’s throats. The pile bunker followed the strike up and obliterated the core.

“One down!” Then, it spun around and violently kicked another Golem, splitting it into two pieces. The leg doubled back and annihilated the exposed core.

The third Golem raised its arms and sprouted what looked like ivy vines, attempting to bind Gerhilde with them. In a flash, Gerhilde’s arms were both tied together.

“Outta... my way!” Gerhilde forced its arms apart and yanked, pulling the massive Golem toward it, and then began swinging the creature around in the air. After a few swings, she let go, sending the Golem crashing into a crowd of its peers. *Holy shit!*

“**[Boost] !**” A magical crimson flame engulfed Gerhilde, signifying its shift into high power mode. After that, it began splintering the Golems one after the other. Her pile bunkers drove one after the other into the Golem cores, causing their massive bodies to wither away in quick succession.

...I made a good call with the pile bunker. I can understand why it’s so admired by manly mecha fans. It’s overwhelming everything head-on with sheer power! There’s no trickery, there’s no jokes! It’s just raw penetration, over and over again!

“Die, die, die! Get crushed, trash! If you’re just gonna stand around, then you deserve it! Ahahaha!”

Wow. She’s uh, really getting into it.

It didn’t seem like there was anything those crystal stakes couldn’t break. Gerhilde was like a crimson goddess of death, exuding raw power on the field. The Golems rotted one after the other, becoming scraps of worthless wood.

“Smaaash!” Gerhilde stood atop the mound of decaying wood, fist raised into the air. She’d done it. She was undefeated.

We didn’t even get a chance to see what Bowman had added. Not that it mattered, since it was clearly a failure.

Still, Gerhilde had exceeded all expectations. Without using its full power, too...

This deadly Frame Gear would be a powerful boon indeed against the Upper Constructs.

I looked up at the shining red robot with a smile on my face. Things were finally looking up.



“I-It’s not my fault! It was just a series of unfortunate events! Th-That’s all!” We were all in the royal palace, watching Bowman sputter out his excuses.

He had strengthened the Behemoths by attaching a modified species of parasitic plant to their backs. The parasites fed on the nutrients of the host and unlocked their latent potential in exchange. That was what I’d seen when I first saw the Golems on the plains.

But as it turns out, the parasites were conscious. Conscious enough to usurp the minds of the Golems and override the control collars that had been imbued into them. It also rendered any conditioned commands useless. The Golems all went berserk as a result, resulting in the rampage.

“Golems aside, those parasitic plants were highly experimental! You did something horrendously dangerous by forcibly modifying them and attaching them to the Golems. Not only that, but you deliberately ignored your own staff and went ahead anyway.” Knight Commander Limit flicked through various laboratory notes as she made her commentary. It seems they’d been seized from Bowman’s lab.

“Goodness gracious... Did you not consider that this might come with risk? Do you even know how many you’ve victimized through your own thoughtlessness?!”

“Now you listen here, Governor Audrey! The risk was calculated! It wasn’t highly likely to occur at all! I would’ve never expected them to take over the Golem’s minds! Nobody would’ve! This rampage was just an accident, a misjudgment. I certainly can’t be blamed for it! I didn’t destroy the city!” Bowman glared at Audrey as he spat his words out. It just felt like a bunch of excuses to me. He was one of the first to flee from the lab after all. Commander Limit found him cowering in the storehouse.

“Did you even need to improve the Golems? Our official talks were converging on accepting Brunhild’s aid. We were set to announce it officially tomorrow. Why did you do something so reckless when our course of action was already settled?!”

Oh, that’s good at least. According to Audrey, four of the seven provinces that made up the Roadmare Union agreed to cooperate with

Brunhild.

Roadmare was made up of the Central Province, the Highland Province, the Mountain Province, the Lakeside Province, the Riverside Province, the Great Plains Province, and the Forge Province. Of those, the highlands, mountains, lakeside, and forge were all in support of accepting Brunhild. Central and the great plains opposed it, while the riverside remained neutral.

An official democratic vote of province representatives was to take place the following day...

“Lady Audrey, I’m willing to bet it was because people started to doubt his Golems after Brunhild’s Frame Gear defeated one in combat. There were many that said our budget should be diverted elsewhere after that incident. He likely made a desperate attempt to strengthen his Golems in order to retain laboratory funding and also save himself from being publicly shamed.” As Limit spoke, Bowman keeled over and began to shudder in irritation, sorrow, or anger.

That’s how it is, huh...? All that to prevent budget cuts?

“Those Golems of yours were total trash, by the way. I took them all out by myself. Pathetic...” Elze sneered at Bowman, which made him look up at her. His expression was one of combined shock and grief.

“Y-You... You defeated my enhanced Golems... a-alone...? B-But....”

“You shouldn’t have attempted to employ something beyond your control. This is a serious crime, Doctor Bowman. You modified them for no good reason, which makes you accountable for their rampage. We’re revoking your degree and formally dismissing you from your post. We’ll also have you serve time in the Mountain Province’s mines. Is that acceptable, Doge?”

“A-Ah... Y-Yes, of course... He must take responsibility, o-of course.” Audrey spoke sternly and confidently. In contrast, the Doge muttered and shook his head quietly.

It was obvious why. The one who had given Bowman the power he wielded was the Doge, after all. In a way, he too was partially responsible for this mess.

Bowman was taken away by a few knights. There had been victims during this tragedy, resulting in several deaths. They probably hadn’t executed him due to his prior services to the country.

“Now then... Doge. Have the town of Recept evacuated. The situation is urgent, and the invasion should begin soon. Send your fastest messenger.”

“W-Wait just a moment... What if we have them evacuate and nothing happens? What do you propose we do then, hm?”

“Are you really still babbling on at this point...? If nothing

happens, we'll formally apologize and compensate them for time and effort wasted. Would you rather we left them there to be slaughtered? I don't think that'd look very good either." The Doge flinched slightly as Audrey reprimanded him. He did as she asked and sent his fastest horse toward the town. Quite rightly, I believed.

"Grand Duke. Please oversee the evacuation of Rimroad, Emynas, and Recept. We'll also permit the deployment of Brunhild's Frame Gears within our territory. Isn't that right, Doge?"

"A-Ah... Y-Yes." The Doge stood there nodding at everything Audrey told him. It was hard to tell who the actual leader was supposed to be.

Either way, we were permitted to intercept the incoming Phrase invasion.

"Thanks for your help. We'll do our best to deal with what's coming. We're going to start deploying our Frame Gears around the area we expect the Phrase to emerge, then." It was likely they'd start appearing in under a day, so I had to make haste.

I returned to Brunhild castle and organized my troops. Knight Commander Lain and her Vice-Commanders Norn and Nikola would be leading nineteen troops each. That would make up three platoons of twenty, commanders included. They'd be stationed as sentries, taking shifts to keep watch on the area.

Brunhild would be left mostly defenseless, but the old men and the remaining soldiers would be more than enough to take care of the place.

I was lending eighteen Chevaliers and two Knight Barons to each of the allied nations. I had them waiting on standby in their own territories. I didn't want a bunch of different nations sitting around in Roadmare's territory during the waiting period, after all.

My fiancées all said they wished to sortie in battle together, but I decided not to let Leen and Sue participate.

I was uneasy about having Sue participate in such risky combat for no reason, and Leen had yet to master the basics of Frame Gear piloting.

Elze would be piloting her Gerhilde, and everyone else would be in Knight Barons fitted with their respective weapons. Yae's would have a Phrasium Katana, Hilde's would have a Phrasium Sword, Lu's would have two Phrasium Daggers, and Yumina and Linze both would be equipped with the long-range Fragarach weapons.

I also asked Rosetta and Monica to sortie in the rear just in case of emergencies like minibots or Frame Gears getting trashed.

"Sir! All the Frame Gears are equipped with crystal weaponry this time, sir! That puts us at a considerable tactical advantage!" There was a lot of crystal debris after the battle at Yulong. I expected this

battle to be a lot cleaner.

I took Brunhild's Frame Gears with me through a portal and we came out by a forest that was a little bit away from where we expected the Phrase to emerge.

There were plains as far as the eye could see, with a few mountains in the distance. Clouds blew by in a gentle breeze, and I could hear gentle birdsong. It was hard to believe this place would soon become a hellish battlefield.

"Alright, this'll be our HQ." I smoothed the ground using magic, and teleported in a few mobile homes from Babylon's Hangar.

These buildings were imbued with a similar effect to my **[Storage]** spell, making them bigger on the inside. They were kept at an ambient temperature too, so they made a good place for the knights to relax. Plus, I'd prepared blankets and beds, so they'd have a place to rest if need be.

I numbered the buildings, as well. Building 1 was for the meeting hall, and Building 2 was the cafeteria. I also called in a third building that women could freely use.

So long as Roadmare was evacuated properly, then the citizens would find themselves heading right our way. Then we'd be able to keep them safe.

We'd also be able to easily spot if the Phrase appeared thanks to the long-distance lenses on the Frame Gears. We were in a vast plain, so there were no obstacles to worry about.

"Think they'll come?"

"I'd prefer it if they didn't, honestly. But it'll be awkward if they don't... I'd have a lot of explaining to do." I was playing a game of shogi with Nikola on the roof of one of the buildings. There was little else to do while we waited, after all.

I opened up my map and saw that the evacuation was proceeding as planned.

"Is Lady Moroha participating this time?"

"Mm, well... Moroha can't operate a Frame Gear at all. It's beyond her, really. She's only good with swords." In truth, she just wasn't all that interested in piloting them. I bet if she managed it, she'd be a serious asset, though...

"Either way, she said she'd fight. I gave her a crystal sword, so we'll see how it goes."

"She'll... fight?"

"Yep. Boots on the ground." Nikola stared at me blankly for a few moments before shaking his head and muttering.

"Well, I suppose anything's possible for your family..." He spoke in a half-whisper, seemingly amused.

She's not my blood-related sister or anything...

In truth, I wasn't all that worried about the upcoming battle. We'd had time to prepare, and there wouldn't be as many as there were in Yulong.

I was nervous about the Upper Construct, though. If it was similar to the Crocodile Phrase we'd fought before, we'd probably be able to manage fine, but if it had a beam attack we'd be in serious trouble. I vividly recalled how it blew away Yulong's capital despite being miles and miles away from it. I was pretty sure I had a good way to counter it, but I couldn't be sure until it happened.

I'd also collected the necessary materials for a Meteor Rain attack, since that helped greatly the last time.

Still, it was an inaccurate attack that couldn't tell friend from foe, and it ate up magic like crazy. It would also do serious damage to the ground.

True, it made for a good pre-emptive strike against the initially emerging Phrase, but I wanted to avoid using it unless absolutely necessary.

And so, we waited as almost an entire day passed. The evacuation had pretty much completed. I looked on my map and found no signs of human life in the nearby towns. It was just a waiting game at this point... Waiting for the invaders.

Nothing happened on the second day, either. I really didn't want them to show up in the middle of the night. They were hard to see in the dark due to the material their bodies were formed out of. As I pondered the best way to fight them in the cover of darkness, the third day came.

As we were eating breakfast, we finally heard news from one of the watchmen.

"There's a crack in space! The Phrase are starting to emerge!" The warning rang out through the headquarters, and the sleeping soldiers got up to climb into their Frame Gears.

There was still some time left. I used it wisely, hopping from portal to portal in order to inform each nation's army of the emergence. Then, I brought them all back with me.

There were a total of two-hundred Frame Gears all lined up, facing the crack. They were prepared to intercept.

"Milord! It's getting bigger!" I used **[Long Sense]** to peek at the crack, and sure enough I could see part of a crystal body poking its way out.

A loud noise rang out, kind of like shattered glass, and Phrase began to pour out of the crack, almost like they were rolling down a slope.

After a while they all tumbled out, and space returned to normal.

"Most of them look like Lesser and Intermediate Constructs..."

Where's the Upper?"

"It takes a while for the Upper Constructs to pass through. It was the same last time, remember?"

"Oh, yeah... That's ri— Wah!" I was using **[Long Sense]**, so I hadn't noticed Ende standing next to me. *This guy... He sure is good at popping up without warning.*

"It'll take about thirty minutes until it gets here, I think. We should mop up these guys before then." Ende split the slide in his hand, and his monochrome Dragoon appeared. He hastily boarded it. *Man, this guy...*

"Search. Total number of Phrase."

"Searching... Eight-thousand-one-hundred-and-forty-one in total." That meant there were around sixty percent of the amount in Yulong. "How many are Intermediate Constructs?"

"Searching... Complete. Eight-hundred-and-nine." *So about ten percent of them... Just like last time. I wonder if there's some kinda rule here...*

I summoned forth Valkyries and had them carry cameras to serve as a live feed. The rulers of each nation in the command center would know the situation of the battle thanks to that. I had the leaders of Roadmare's provinces there as well. I didn't want them blaming me for anything like in Yulong's case.

HQ was also equipped with spare Frame Gears, and Rosetta, Monica, Flora, and Leen were on standby too. The emergency escape magic also had HQ as the primary target.

"Touya, they're on the move." I heard Yumina's voice through the communicator. I'd set it so Elze's Gerhilde and the Knight Barons all had a direct line with me. I'd found stuff in the storehouse that let me upgrade my comms, which was nice.

I invoked **[Long Sense]** once more to check on the front lines. It was just as Yumina had told me, they were marching onward.

Oh, there's flying ones... Manta Phrase, and... Oh, that's new. A dolphin...? No... It's an Orca Phrase... Flying here, too. That's definitely an Intermediate Class.

"Alright, let's get this started." I opened up **[Storage]** and took out two greatswords. Naturally, I held one in each hand.

"All units! The battle begins now! Follow your respective commanders! Let's send these Phrase back to hell!"

"HOO-AAAH!" The very earth rumbled as the Frame Gears charged toward their targets.

I used **[Fly]** and went off to wipe out the flying ones.



The Manta Phrase and Orca Phrase were approaching from the

front.

However, the Manta was moving a bit faster. It swerved, attempting to cleave at me with its body.

I wasn't going to be beaten that easily, though. I swerved to the side and cut it in half as I flew by.

Suddenly, an orb of light appeared around the Orca Phrase's head. *Crap.*

After a couple of moments, it fired the orb at me. *So it's another ranged attacker...* I slashed this one too, destroying its core as well.

There were more Mantas and Orcas, though. They came at me one after the other. They were really easy to read, so I made short work of them.

I wasn't just confined to the ground, so I could attack and defend at all angles.

I looked down at the battlefield and noticed that the fight had already begun.

The northern area was being spearheaded by Elze, who was taking command of Brunhild and Lestia, while Mismede and Refreese were in the middle. Regulus, Lihnea, and Ramissh were in the south. I noticed Ende in the southern area, too.

They were holding back the Phrase pretty efficiently. All their movements seemed much better than they were during the Yulong battle. Even the Lestian Knights were doing great, despite it being their first time.

"Smash! Crash! Bash! Just try and take me, you brittle jackasses!" Elze's Gerhilde smashed into an Intermediate Construct, firing a pile bunker to finish it off. Behind her, Brunhild's knights were making swift work of the Lesser Constructs.

The knights were wielding crystal weaponry. Hammers, swords, spears, and so on. It made fighting the Phrase a total breeze. I'd also enchanted them with **[Gravity]** to give them a bit more weight.

They couldn't just wildly swing, though. If they wanted to smash the cores, they needed to attack properly. The adept knights were outfitted with spears, while the knights who were less confident in their skills were given broader weapons like hammers and maces.

"Huh, is that all the flying ones?" I couldn't see any more Mantas or Orcas anywhere. There weren't many flying ones at all. My work complete, I decided to head to the ground.

Just as I decided that, I saw a Chevalier being attacked by two Lesser Constructs at once. Its right arm and left leg had been completely annihilated.

It fell to the ground and changed color from light gray to a deeper gray... Looked kind of like going from a moon gray to a standard gray. That was the best way I could describe it.

I'd made it so Frame Gears changed colors on successful activation of the emergency escape spell. That was all thanks to a new paint I'd created by using **[Program]**. It was a special paint imbued with Ether Liquid, allowing it to respond to the use of magic on the Frame Gear.

I wanted to make a paint that got darker to highlight the effects of my **[Gravity]** spell, but it didn't end up working out.

[Gravity] was a spell that, contrary to its name, actually just controlled weight. I couldn't use it to make things float, though. I had the **[Levitation]** spell for that. Still, my weight-altering magic made things lighter or heavier.

All I ended up making was a paint that made things heavier or lighter. It didn't have a lot of use. Or maybe it did...? I wasn't sure, actually.

Either way, I was getting off-track.

"Come in, come in. Do you hear me, HQ? Did that pilot come in safely?"

"Safe and sound, sir! Minor arm damage, but this maggot can suck it up!" The pilot was fine, then. That was a relief... Still, it seemed like he was from Lestia. It wasn't all that surprising. They were the least prepared, after all.

I saw three crystal blades floating around in the northern area, slicing through several Lesser Constructs. Their cores were all destroyed in the blink of an eye.

Oh... Yumina!

The Fragarachs roared across the battlefield, shattering core after core. They gracefully returned to Yumina's Frame Gear after completing their tour of duty.

Fragarachs were definitely hard to control. If they weren't used right, they could harm your allies. Yumina had been training hard, though, so she was capable of handling three at once.

Linze was a much more proficient mage than Yumina, so she masterfully let four of them fly around at will. She had some issues taking out distant enemies, though.

Yae and Hilde were nearby, completely destroying an Intermediate Construct. And Lu was wildly swinging her twin blades against the Lesser Constructs.

Seemed like I didn't have a thing to worry about in the northern sector.

In the south, the monochrome Dragoon was freely darting around and slashing Intermediate Constructs to pieces. Ende glided around like a figure skater, spinning and slicing at his own discretion.

The Phrase continued to attack him over and over, but he didn't pay them any mind at all.

The Dragoon was built for mobility, so it didn't have much of a

focus on defense. That meant if even a single shot got through, it could be seriously bad news. Even so, Ende continued his reckless dance, not letting a single one of them land a shot on him.

The southern area also seemed well-defended...

Alright, what about the middle grounds... W-Wait a sec... The Phrase hordes in the middle were being mowed down one after the other as well. A single woman darted between them, a greatsword in her hands. She sliced Lesser and Intermediate Constructs like butter. Her power was insane, comparable to Ende or Elze's efforts... And she wasn't even in a Frame Gear.

It was, of course, Moroha. She was wielding a crystal greatsword much like mine, and used it to its full strength. Her movements were intense, like a ferocious goddess... Or rather, she actually was a goddess. Just watching her felt overwhelming... I wondered if there was even a chance she'd lose.



Hmph... I actually feel like I'm not really needed here...

When I heard something breaking nearby, I turned to see a Chevalier lose its head. The Frame Gear's color changed as it fell to the ground. He was attacked from behind because he was too focused on the enemy ahead.

"All units, be mindful of your surroundings. Fight while covering each other. The Phrase want to kill us, remember? Try to buddy up and watch each other's backs." I spoke over the general channel. An attack would come regardless of direction. It was wiser to wait for the enemy to seek you out.

"How many Phrase are left?"

"Searching... Four-thousand-and-eighteen remaining." My smartphone chimed as it spoke back to me. We'd beaten about half. Not bad, considering it had been around twenty minutes since the fight began.

In order to kill all of them, each Frame Gear needed to kill about forty Phrase apiece. We'd already defeated half, so that was twenty enemies each in twenty minutes. This pace was pretty good...

Given that it took us over three hours to take out the thirteen-thousand or so back in Yulong, we were making great time. The crystal weapons were clearly an excellent addition. Gerhilde, Ende, and Moroha were definitely major players in terms of numbers, though.

Still, there was an Upper Construct due after thirty minutes, and twenty had gone by. I had wanted to kill all the Lesser Constructs before it emerged, but it seemed impossible.

"Ah, Touya. You there?"

"Ende? Something up?"

"Upper Construct's coming now. North-east. You should be able to see the warp in space." I looked over to where Ende was talking about.

Let's see... It's... there, right?

I invoked [**Long Sense**] to check, and sure enough there was a ripple in the air. It almost looked like a mirage, like the very air itself was swaying in heat.

That meant that cracks would appear in space not long after, and the Upper Construct would emerge. I decided it'd be a good idea to have the northern troops fall back a bit.

"This is an order to all Brunhild and Lestian troops in the northern area. Move west from your current station. And here's a message for everyone else. An Upper Construct will soon appear to the north-west in ten minutes. Be mindful." In response to my command, the Frame Gears in the north began moving west. The deployment before kind of

resembled an arc, but now it was more like a straight line.

To an outsider it'd seem like they were being pushed back, but this was all part of the plan. The Upper Construct was a more valuable target, after all.

After a while, I heard a cracking and splitting sound.

Just as Ende had predicted, the crack began to form in space around the distortion. The Upper Construct was slowly forcing itself through, making the hole bigger.

"The Upper Construct is beginning to emerge. Take care in your movements, troops. More than before, even. Keep in close contact with one another, and obey your commanders closely." Ende and Elze moved closer upon hearing the time was nearing.

The cracks in space were spreading even further.

After a time, four thick crystal arms emerged from the hole in space. The Upper Construct began crawling out, attempting to break the "wall" before it.

It was huge. Four times as large as a Frame Gear. It had four massive arms, two on either side of its body. It had short legs, causing it to constantly lean forwards in a hunch. It didn't really have a neck, either. Its head was closely connected with its torso. There was also a single massive orange core in its chest. In short, it was...

"A gorilla?" It resembled a mountain gorilla, except for a few details. Gorillas didn't typically have four arms. Gorillas also lacked protrusions on their spines and elongated tails.

I hadn't seen any kind of Phrase that looked like this in the book from the Library, either. But I guess that was fair, since it'd be too easy if every Phrase type had been recorded there.

As I stared at it, the Gorilla Phrase started beating its own chest with all four arms. *It's drumming its own body? It really is a gorilla!*

"Gh—?!" An impact rushed through my body and I was knocked over. It felt like I'd been smacked by something invisible, like a shockwave.

I see. It's kinda like the dorsal fin from the Crocodile Phrase in the last battle. So it beats on its chest to knock back enemies... Interesting. Wait, that means...

"All units, spread out! Keep away from the Upper Construct's front!" Both sets of the Gorilla Phrase's arms spread outwards, and its chest slowly opened up almost like a door. It wasn't long before light began to gather in its chest. *Shit, I knew it! It's gonna fire a laser beam like the Crocodile Phrase did back then!* The Frame Gears had all dispersed, but the highland territory was in its direct line of fire.

Damn it, I'm gonna have to use that...

"**[Reflection]**!" I made use of a reflective spell I'd recently learned, deploying it right in front of the Gorilla Phrase. It took the

form of a massive blue-white barrier angled around forty-five degrees in front of the beam.

The blast of light hit the barrier, stopped, and shot off into the sky. The barrier shattered to pieces as well.

Damn... It was strong enough to break a barrier that thick? The spell could've caused damage to the Gorilla Phrase if I'd angled it to mirror the attack right back, but that would've come with the risk of damaging Roadmare's territory. Not to mention I had no proof that a Phrase could actually be harmed by its own attack. Knowing them, it'd just end up absorbing the beam and redistributing it somehow.

Either way, it was a serious problem. It was definitely weaker than the crocodile, but that didn't really do much to make me feel better.

The Gorilla Phrase's chest closed up once more, and it started beating its hands against itself. Then, it began charging toward the troops in the north-west.

Goddammit, this guy's a pain! The Gorilla Phrase raged forward with its mighty arms. Every time it brought its fists down, the earth was ruptured and split. Its power was immense, to say the least.

"You're mine! **[Boost]**!" Elze piloted Gerhilde and ran right up to the Gorilla Phrase, driving a magically-reinforced pile bunker into its side.

The sound of cracking glass filled the area, and one of the beast's right arms was shattered. *That pile bunker is really something...*

"Haha! Did it!" Elze cheered, but the gorilla was quick to rise and beat its chest again. The resulting shockwave knocked her far away.

"Gwaaah?!" Gerhilde successfully readjusted itself in mid-air and landed safely.

The Gorilla Phrase paid no heed to its broken arm. Instead, it remained still as the core in its chest pulsed a bright orange.

The annihilated arm was fast to recover, snapping and cracking back into place as it regenerated. In only a matter of seconds, the arm was back to its original form. *That's gonna be a problem...*

The gorilla flexed its new arm and attempted to bring it down on Gerhilde. Fortunately, Elze had invoked **[Boost]** just in time, and she strafed left and right to avoid its blows.

"**[Slip]**!" I used my magic to make the giant gorilla lose its balance, giving Gerhilde just enough time to escape.

Moroha suddenly appeared out of nowhere, thrusting her sword toward the chest of the fallen gorilla. That didn't stop the enemy from being what it was, though. Even Moroha was limited in what she could do with a mere blade. It was nowhere near big enough to penetrate all the way through to the core.

Just as I was thinking that, Moroha pulled out a second sword and

stabbed the first sword with it, sending it deeper into the creature's chest. It still wasn't enough, however.

"Hmph... Sheesh, even two aren't enough? This guy's thicker than I thought..." Moroha jumped back before the gorilla could swat her like a fly.

I jumped down next to her.

"Touya, this thing's way tougher than me right now. I could smash it if I used my powers, but obviously that's a no-no."

Wait, that means if you used your divine powers you could sort it out right away! Do that! Do that, damn it!

"Mmm... I mean, I *could* go all-out, but everyone here would probably die alongside this guy, and the continent would probably get cut in half as well. That cool with you?"

"Nope!"

What the hell, can't you adjust how much power you use?! That's insane! Then again, it was probably like being asked to move an extra millimeter or two during a walk. It'd be way too easy for my sisters to overstep that because they weren't used to walking along at a snail's pace.

"Also, if I use my divinity in this realm, then I probably won't be able to maintain myself down here. I'd like to avoid that if possible."

"Bah, fine! You can go." *True strength comes from deploying the right person at the right time. Since both of my sisters don't have flesh bodies like I do, they'll be unable to keep themselves manifested if they blow through all their divine power... They're made out of divine energy right now, so I shouldn't be wasteful in making use of them.*

Plus, they're not even allowed to use most of their powers down here anyway. Karen's obviously fine with her love consultation and stuff like that, but if Moroha started going nuts with her overkill swordplay, then we'd have a big issue. There are a lot of rules in place, but I assume it's for a good reason.

A shrill screeching sound filled the air all of a sudden. The Gorilla Phrase was emitting the noise. All the protrusions along its back were vibrating intensely.

What the hell?! In a flash, the ground around the gorilla began to distort. It was like bumps in a carpet. I picked up Moroha and flew back up into the air.

It was almost like waves in the earth. Nearby Frame Gears were being jostled and bounced around.

Some people had managed to minimize damage by jumping up in time, but a large amount of Frame Gears were immobilized, their colors changed.

I didn't know it could do this too! That's cheating! Some of the Frame Gears that had managed to avoid the initial attack were crawling to

safety, Elze's Gerhilde was also fine.

But the Gorilla Phrase wasn't done. It followed up with a mighty tail whip. It had some kind of heavy weight on the end of its tail, and it used it to smash a lot of the Frame Gears in the area.

It furiously lashed at the ground, hitting Frame Gears one after the other. The pilots seemed to have escaped since their mechs had changed color, but I couldn't determine their safety. Even if they were dead, we still had to manage...

The Gorilla Phrase moved to open its chest again. As it did so, the light began to gather around its core.

Crap! Again?! Should I reflect the attack back at it...? No, I can't! If there's any collateral damage it'd be intense.

I had no option but to reflect the attack skywards once more.

"**[Reflection]**!" I created a reflective barrier in front of the gorilla again. Just as before, I angled it to forty-five degrees.

But all of a sudden, the Gorilla Phrase crossed its arms over its chest.

"What the—?!" The beam fired, blasting against the creature's crystal arms. In a flash, the thick central beam split and refracted into several thinner blasts.

Did it seriously scatter the light using its own body?! The smaller beams were less powerful, but the attack was still devastating. Various Frame Gears lost their colors around me, even though their cockpits were spared direct hits. It was insanity.

Damn it... Guess we've got no choice.

"All troops fall back! Clear some distance between you and the giant Phrase!" I used **[Storage]** to open up several pockets of space above the Gorilla Phrase, then released the contents.

"**[Meteor Rain]**!" From the portals in the sky came a rain of softball-shaped Phrasium orbs. I'd used **[Gravity]** to amplify the weight of each, causing every one to weigh about a ton.

The Upper Construct could only gaze upward in confusion as they crashed down upon it.

Shoulders, back, waist. The Phrasium orbs pelted the creature and wound up lodged inside its body, cracking and penetrating it deeper with every second. I increased the weight by a further two tons for good measure.

Eventually, the crystal rain subsided. The Gorilla Phrase had been brought to its knees, crawling weakly on all fours. Suddenly, however, it rolled over on to its back.

What the...? Wait, no! The heavy Phrasium orbs lodged inside the creature's body all rolled back out. The gorilla had used gravity to its advantage. I was amazed it could come up with such a tactic.

Damn it! The cracks are regenerating, too! At that moment, a

monochrome Dragoon came through at high speeds, jumping up from behind me and landing on the gorilla's upturned chest. It stabbed the blade it was wielding directly into the crystal beast.

But, just like when Moroha had tried, the blade couldn't cut deep enough to reach the core.

"[Char]!" Ende yelled something, and the gorilla's chest shattered open in response. The Dragoon's right arm also split apart at the same time. The Gorilla Phrase stood up and made an attempt to brush Ende away, but he deftly avoided it.

Immediately following Ende's retreat, a lightning-fast Frame Gear came up from behind him and charged toward the exposed core with its fist.

"Single Smasher!!!" It was Elze in Gerhilde, launching a lethal pile bunker into the exposed core.

The orange thing cracked and then shattered into numerous shards. In tandem, the entire gorilla body cracked, and then crumpled into an unrecognizable pile.

"Woohoo!"

"Ahaha... Good work...." Gerhilde raised its arm into the air, proudly standing over the gorilla's remains.

Geez... I didn't even get to do that much.

"The Upper Construct has fallen. Let's begin mopping up the leftovers now. Take them out, one at a time." I relayed the message to the other Frame Gears. There were only a few Lesser and Intermediate Constructs left, so work was almost over.

"I'll go help too, yeah? Lemme borrow some swords, Touya." Moroha had used up all her weapons on the Gorilla Phrase, so I gave her two greatswords.

She moved with grace and speed in equal measures as she darted off to the fight.

As I saw her off, the Dragoon came up to me. The hatched popped open, and out jumped Ende.

"My bad, Touya. The arm broke."

"No, you were a real lifesaver back there. I'll fix the Dragoon for you, so come back and pick it up later... By the way, just what did you even do back there?"

"I used a magical 'sound,' or at least a vibration. I was trying to focus it on one point, but the arm blew off as well. I misjudged how much power to use."

Huh, I see. Kinda like when I tried using the Knight Baron at full power. The Dragoon's base was, after all, the same as the Knight Baron and Chevalier's, it was probably a little weak for the full brunt of Ende's strength.

I should probably make him a new one from the ground up. It'd be a

pain if it broke every time he did something like that, since he'll have to come back to us and get it fixed. Might raise questions, since he doesn't serve Brunhild.

As I was thinking to myself, I looked over at the Dragoon and suddenly felt a strange sensation wash over me.

What the... hell?

".....I'm sorry, Touya. Things just got a little bit worse." Ende moved up close to me, staring up at something in the sky all the while.

What is that?

"Hey... Don't tell me another Upper Construct is gonna show up!"

"It's... not an Upper Construct. It's so much worse. I'm sorry." The sky itself seemed to shatter as a harrowing screech rang out through the land.

In under a second, the "thing" emerged from the gaping hole, and gracefully landed on the ground.

A crystal... person. A body covered all over in Phrasium, with the exception of its stomach.

It had piercing red eyes. Its long "hair" crackled and made snapping noises. It looked like it was based on a female human, judging from its chest and body shape. The chest was completely covered in crystal as well, coating all the way along its shoulders and arms. It was around the same size as a regular woman.

"What... What the hell is this?"

"This is a Phrase beyond even the Upper Constructs... A Dominant Construct."

"A what?!" She looked around and, apparently picking up on my shock, looked right over at me and Ende.

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"Damn it... For her of all Phrase to come through the barrier..." Ende smiled wryly as she began approaching him. All of a sudden she jumped into the air and brought her fist crashing toward him.

Ende caught her fist with his right hand. The shockwave from the impact nearly bowled me over.



Holy cow, she's strong... Luckily Ende isn't exactly normal, either.

"Wh-What the hell?! Is this a friend of yours?!"

"We know each other, but I wouldn't exactly call us friends. I doubt she'll let me escape, either." She didn't exactly look like she was happy to see him. The human features made it easier to read her feelings, and she looked seriously pissed off.

「#k≡#is@m@\$! ouwo * d◎o kΩo≡hey + @tΣt@?!」

"I don't know, I'm sorry." I couldn't understand a word she was saying, but Ende seemed to know enough to respond.

The Phrase Woman struck Ende's arm and jumped back, putting a good deal of distance between them. After a few seconds, she opened her mouth up wide.

Particles of light began gathering around her open maw, combining together in a glittering orb.

Oh crap, that's not good!

Moments later, she unleashed a devastating beam of energy toward Ende. I could tell even at a glance that it was far more powerful than the beams employed by the Upper Constructs.

"Gh, **[Reflection]**!" I produced a reflective barrier in a frenzied panic. Due to the short notice, I didn't have much finesse, and the beam ended up being reflected at an awkward angle. I watched as the beam vanished into the sky, after destroying a distant mountaintop. Naturally, the reflective barrier was annihilated as well.

What... What the hell kinda strength is that?!

Ever-adaptive, the Phrase Woman transformed her right arm into a blade and came charging forward. Ende deftly dodged her slashes and grabbed her by the wrists.

"Sorry Touya, I've gotta bail. I'll come back for my Dragoon later on, so I'd appreciate it if you patched her up. Thanks!"

"Huh? What?!" Ende's body began to evaporate into a fog as he kept a tight grip on the Phrase woman. After a short while, the two of them completely dispersed into mist, leaving me alone.

I stood there on the abandoned battlefield, left completely in shock. I had no way of understanding just what it was I'd seen.



In some ways, I am not a fortunate man. For it to have been her... one of the Sovereign's most trusted aides. For it to have been her... a being that so truly despises me...

Still, I am fortunate in this instance... Only in that I have managed to lead her out of the dimensional boundary. My dimensional warp has successfully brought the two of us to a gap between worlds. It's not a power I can use excessively, though. It'll take some time before I can return to the

world I just abandoned.

There's really nothing at all within the space between dimensions. Nothing but her, as she glares. A grid-like pattern stretches out in the distance behind us, above us, below us, and in front of us.

"I wondered why... I wondered why there were so many miserable little humans on the other side, you wretched cur! Was this your doing, Endymion?!"

"Hey, don't misunderstand me here. It'd be a pain if you guys ended up breaking through, so I've been killing the ones you sent. Still, the fact that a Dominant Construct like you made it through only means it's already too late." It was certainly no small feat for beings like the Phrase to cross worlds. I was worried they had found the right seam to tear in order to rip their way into the next world, and it seems that my fears were not unfounded.

"Well, that matters not now. I have questions for you, scum. The Sovereign. Where is the Sovereign?!"

"Like I told you last time, I don't know. The Sovereign is surely somewhere in that world, though. But have you never stopped to consider that the one you seek might not want to see you?"

"Hold your tongue, Endymion! If it weren't for your interloping, our Sovereign would have never lost their sanity! You dare act self-righteous when you destabilized our world?!" *Interloping... Of course. Her opinion of me was never high to begin with. But that's simply a matter of opinion in the end. My role as observer doesn't extend far beyond the act itself. Though I can't deny the effects of what I did.*

"I'll ask, just to be sure, but... I don't suppose you plan on leaving this world alone?"

"Don't be a fool! We'll never withdraw, not until we've rescued our Sovereign!"

"Rescued, huh? Seems more like captured to me." The girl, Ney... began to gnash her teeth in response to my words.

"Don't dare confuse my ambitions with those mongrel dogs! I don't wish to seize the Sovereign's power! I merely want the Sovereign back!" The Phrase all hunted the Sovereign. There were some among them that desired to become the new Sovereign, of course. Ney was different, however. She only wanted to reinstate the Sovereign to their original position. But she was still my enemy.

"I would like to ask you to withdraw. I have a personal investment in this world. I even managed to meet an interesting person there." *Mochizuki Touya... A strange fellow indeed. I'm never able to get a proper read on him. He's abnormal. He resembles a human, but he doesn't smell like one at all. He lives in that world, but I can tell that he's not from that world. I've never met an individual like him before. It's possible he's from some kind of mutated or divergent lineage.*

The people referred to as his 'sisters' were also abnormal, though slightly different. I was fairly sure they were the same species as him, though. Rarities across the cosmos.

I sensed no hostility from him when we first met. He treated me kindly, and often meddled in affairs so he could save people. He was a man who often got a raw deal, but still worked for the sake of others.

I want to introduce him to the Sovereign. If that's possible, at least.

"We will rescue the Sovereign even if we have to vivisect every last human in that world. Your feelings are irrelevant."

"I see... Are you sure? You may find yourself at odds with one more powerful than I." That made her angry again, of course. Her anger was justified. I was the one that snatched their precious Sovereign away.

It's not as if we intended this to happen. We simply thought that the other Phrase would elect a new Sovereign and carry on with their lives.

But they wanted power. They clung to the old strength, their traditions. They didn't adapt or overcome. They desired to regain their old power, even if that meant following it across worlds and wiping out countless lives.

As a result, they spread out across reality and became a great plague. They had no intention of stopping. The irony isn't lost on me, of course. They're doing what I do, just on a larger and more destructive scale. The only thing I can do in my selfishness is mitigate the damage they cause.

The Sovereign slowly saps the energy of its host bit-by-bit. When the host dies, the Sovereign transports itself into another host. In most cases the host never realizes what's inside them, and lives out their life without any worries. The Sovereign doesn't harm the one they're infesting, after all.

After repeating that process several times, the Sovereign gains enough energy to cross dimensions and head toward the next world. The world 'higher up' than the previous one.

When the host dies, the Sovereign's 'voice' becomes audible for but a scant moment. Every time the sound resounds, the Sovereign climbs closer and closer up those stairs. As it changes host in this world, it slowly builds more power.

"Do you think the miserable humans of that world have strength enough to oppose us?"

"You saw them take out an Upper Construct, did you not?"

"Hmph. I'm sure you had something to do with that. Once this accursed barrier falls, we'll be sure to annihilate the entire species!" A clanging sound echoed out into the black as Ney struck the physical boundary of their world.

We were both within the gap between worlds, but she was outside of the membrane, and I was inside. *This girl and her allies... They aren't capable of my ability, the power that allows one to shift between worlds with ease. They're left with no choice but to look for loose seams and force*

their way through.

It would buy us time, at least, but it was still an inevitability. Surely the other Dominant Constructs were searching for weak points as well.

“I’ve offered you this chance before, Ney... But how about you just join m—”

“Silence! I shall not be charmed by honeyed words! I’m not like Lycee!”

“What a shame. She’d like to see you again, I’m sure.”

“...Is Lycee safe?”

“She is.” *Lycee’s likely waiting for me to come back even as I’m having this conversation. Though I feel as though I’ll be late today. Still, she’s tough. I’m sure it’ll be fine.*

“...When next we meet, you won’t find me so merciful. Hold on to your pathetic life until then, scum.” With those words, Ney faded into the blackness. *Goodness gracious me... She always was a hassle.*

It’ll take a considerable amount of time before my power returns. I won’t be able to get back to that world for a while... It’s why I wasn’t keen on using this ability. Either way, given the hostile nature of Ney’s encounter with me, it was the only thing I could do.

Although... I have a feeling Touya may have done something to surprise me, like he usually does. It’s been so very long since I’ve smelled a person like him, after all.

About five-thousand years, I think... He’s similar to that interesting woman who also managed to muster the impossible.

Regina Babylon, I think her name was.



That Dominant Construct or whatever vanished, but the fact that something like that existed was scary. I didn’t know we’d be facing something more powerful than an Upper Construct. Plus, it was the size of a human being, which meant fighting it in the Frame Gear wasn’t wise.

Naturally, the incident was broadcast to the world leaders who were watching the battlefield, and they had dozens of questions for me. I didn’t have any answers, though. All I could say was that the creature was beyond the Gorilla Phrase in strength, and it appeared to have emotions.

She spoke in an unusual tongue, but it felt like she was actively communicating with Ende. I wasn’t sure what to make of that.

Either way, the battle was over and we’d already finished cleaning the place up. The damage to Roadmare was far less than the damage done to Yulong. Though, one of the mountaintops *had* been blown clear away. The battlefield itself was also a total wasteland thanks to

the raw destructive power of that gorilla.

Thankfully, we hadn't taken any fatalities, but there were definitely a lot of injured. Most of the injuries had come from the earthquake triggered by the Upper Construct. The wounded soldiers had been sent straight to the HQ, where Sue and Leen patched them up with recovery magic. Flora also chipped in with medication.

Even after all our preparation, it ended up like this. Still, we were very lucky to even know what was happening in the first place.

Roadmare was saved. Though their capital city had incurred serious structural damage thanks to the Golem rampage. That didn't really have anything to do with us, though.

Bowman was forced to toil in the mines as punishment for his negligence. His sentence was a full ten years of hard labor.

The Doge was also struck by several accusations of reckless endangerment and negligence for funding Bowman's plan in the first place.

Eventually he was stripped of his title, and a new member of the nobility stepped up to control the central province in his place.

The one to succeed him as Doge of the Roadmare Union was none other than the diligent Governor Audrey.

She was definitely cunning, and used us to her advantage. That didn't make her a bad person, though. Just a shrewd one.

Working with Audrey would be much better than that stupid old jerk.

As her first act, she ceased all production and research on the Golems. That was only natural. They didn't want another out-of-control Golem going wild.

Also, after a discussion amongst their representatives, they all agreed to join the alliance. It seemed like the main reason for that decision was so they could borrow our Frame Gears in case of emergency, though. I decided to give them some Frame Units for practice.

Cleaning up the mess in Roadmare was much easier thanks to the Frame Gears, but none of their knights were able to pilot them, so I decided to dispatch various knights to act as instructors. Nikola was among them.

The city was gradually returning to its former glory thanks to the clean-up operation.

Doge Audrey also started work on repairing the relations between Roadmare and Regulus, drafting up several agreeable deals in very little time.

Naturally they wouldn't be best friends right away, but it was a sure step in the right direction.

Roadmare was between the nations of Ramissh, Regulus, Felsen,

and Yulong. It traded with most of those locations via land routes. Well, used to. Yulong's dissolution cut off that lifeline.

That was why the agreement with Regulus was an unexpected godsend. Certainly good for the Union on a whole.

"Master, sir! Requesting some of your time, sir!"

"Huh?" Rosetta was in the middle of repairing Ende's Dragoon in the Hangar, but she stopped me. More specifically, she was attaching a new arm to replace the one Ende had broken. We'd fit the new and improved Dragoon with a sturdier endoskeleton. The Dragoon was built for speed over of power, so it was no real surprise that it had broken so easily. I wouldn't be surprised if it ended up happening again.

Rosetta hopped down from the crane.

"Something odd happened during the recent battle, sir!"

"Huh? Like what?" During the day of the battle, I asked Rosetta and Monica to keep watch over the Frame Gears.

They also had the jobs of observing and investigating the movements of the Phrase. They were basically our eyes in the sky. I definitely didn't want to leave that to Parshe... Her clumsiness was lethal.

"Well, sir! The numbered of injured soldiers amounted to thirty-six, yessir! However, there was a major discrepancy! You recovered thirty-five Frame Gears from the battlefield. That leaves one unit unaccounted for, sir!"

"...For real?" That didn't make any sense. I used **[Storage]** to pick up all the Frame Gear debris in the vicinity. The only way it could've gone missing was if it was already taken before I cleaned things up.

"To be more specific, sir! We're missing a head, a chest, a left forearm, and an entire right leg! All parts are from a Chevalier, sir!"

"So it got stolen in the middle of battle or something?"

"No, sir! I think it's the opposite! I think after some destruction was done, someone gathered broken-off pieces!" Rosetta turned on a monitor in the garage. It was the aerial recording that showed the battle a few days ago. In terms of timeframe, it was just before the Upper Construct had appeared. I wondered what she was having me look at.

"Look here, sir!" She paused the recording with the push of a button. There was a broken Frame Gear in the corner of the screen.

She suddenly started the recording again, and the Frame Gear somehow moved itself off-screen.

"...Huh? What's with that?"

"Let's switch to magic-filtering vision, sir!"

"Eh?" Rosetta pushed a button, and the overlay of the video changed. It showed the figures of various men carrying pieces of the

Frame Gear away. They had a blue light around them. I couldn't make the details out, but they looked like humans. It was possible they were demi-humans, but they didn't have the telltale ears and tails that beastmen had.

"Seems like they're using some kind of disappearance spell or artifact, sir! They were caught by our magic-detecting overlays, though! See? You can see them right against the Frame Gear paint, sir!" Our Frame Gears were painted with magical paint, so the contrast made it easier to detect them through the special overlay. Still, I had no idea who these guys were supposed to be.

They were hardly likely to be people from the alliance. I was already giving Frame Gears to them, after all. There'd be no point.

It could've been a foreign country, though. The battle was known about for a few days. That meant someone could've snuck in to take advantage.

"Geez... It's like petty crooks stealing stuff from the scene of an apartment fire or something. Fine... Run search, broken Frame Gear parts."

"...Search Complete. Displaying." My map was projected, but no pins fell down on to it. The broken pieces in Babylon obviously weren't displayed due to the protective magical barrier around the floating islands, and since I'd specified broken parts there were no pins in Roadmare either, but still... I was expecting a few results.

"Sir! It's entirely possible they have a barrier that prevents magical detection! Possibly like the type we have installed here." Well, that would make sense. But still, that meant tracking them wouldn't be possible.

"Would it be possible for them to make a Frame Gear out of the parts?"

"No way, sir! The best they could do is crudely re-assemble a broken Chevalier, but they couldn't mass produce it." That seemed fine, then. They didn't have the Ether Liquid, either. They lacked the technology to actually threaten me.

"But it could become a problem if they apply the technology elsewhere, sir! There's a chance they could produce an inferior version of the Frame Gear."

"Ugh... That sounds like a pain..." Monica, who was also fixing Ende's Dragoon, sat atop its shoulder and spoke up.

"Would it not be wise to inform each member of your alliance that it has been stolen? It'd like, totally be a big deal if a fake Chevalier went on a rampage and stuff! You'd totally get the blame!" She had a point. An imitation Chevalier wouldn't be easy to operate without Ether Liquid, but I didn't want to take any chances.

Still... Frame Gear imitations. Some kind of inferior version of the

tech... I had one of my patented strange feelings that something bad would come of this.

“Still, sir! They’d never be able to make something better than our Frame Gears, so don’t worry about it at all!”

“I know that, but I still feel a little funny just leaving it be...” It was too late to think about countermeasures, though. I should’ve installed a self-destruct or something. I remember this awesome mecha anime where the protagonist blew up the machine along with himself. I wondered if it was for the sake of style... Could’ve been for the sake of protecting his secrets, though. But who in their right mind would get on a mech that’d blow you up just like that...

“Yae and Hilde’s Frame Gears are more important right now. Should I base it on the Frame Gear we made for Elze, sir?!”

“Hm... Yeah, we don’t need to tweak much. Just make a general fighting type for Yae. It doesn’t need to be specialized too much otherwise. Hilde’s will be much the same.”

“Sir yes sir! And who will we be making Frame Gears for after that?”

“You’ll make one for meee!” I looked toward the Hangar’s entrance, finding Sue standing there. She was accompanied by Cesca, who had presumably brought her up. What a surprise.

Sue then bolted toward me and did one of her famous hug-tackles.

“Isn’t it time for me to have a Frame Gear?! Isn’t it! I’m tired of just playing in the Frame Unit, you know?!” She kept headbutting me in the stomach. *Guh... A Frame Gear for Sue...*

I was a little concerned, to be honest. It wasn’t about her skills or anything. She’d actually been performing really well in the Frame Unit simulations. She had prodigal levels of skill when it came to handling it, so I had no doubts in my mind that she’d become a great pilot.

But it was clear to me she viewed it all as a game. On the battlefield, you had to be prepared to take lives. I didn’t think she was ready for that.

“C’mon Sue... you really wanna do dangerous stuff like that?”

“Don’t be stupid! I am your fiancée, Touya! I’ll fight when I need to fight, I say! I’m no trophy wife to sit still and look pretty! I wanna protect the people I care about!” She glared at me with a serious gaze. Her determination was palpable. Probably because she’d grown up in a noble house... She really was incredible for her age.

Maybe I’d been treating her too much like a child.

“...Fine, then. We’ll work on your Frame Gear afterward. What kind did you have in mind?”

“A strong one!” That was a little ambiguous. I decided to ask for a little more information.

“I want a huge one! I want one that can totally trash the enemy

like Gerhilde! And, oh! Like that one you showed me... The one that can combine and turn into a bigger one!" *Oh... From that anime.*

"Then we can deploy rotating arms and rip out the Phrase cores, yeah! Oh, oh! Make a giant golden hammer for it as well!"

Ah, geez... I guess that's kinda familiar. Hmm... I'll make it built for power, then. It'll be good for offense and defense alike. But that'll mean I have to sacrifice mobility. After that... It's just a matter of using Fragarach tech for the weapons. What about combining and transforming, though... I don't think I can do it without an AI or something. Maybe if other people pilot the other parts? Nah, that's too much...

"I think it'll be fine, sir! I think there's something that will suit her needs in the storehouse."

Really, now... Well, I guess if there was something that could bring a picture frame to life, an AI might not be entirely out of the question. If there's something like that, I can use it to support Sue's Frame Gear.

"Hmm... Alright, I have a few ideas. I'll get on it."

"Woohoo! Thanks, Touya! You're the best husband ever!" Sue hugged me tight and puckered her lips, catching me with a kiss before I could tell what was happening. Then, she nuzzled her cheek up against mine. She'd definitely grown a little bit...

Just as I quietly thought about her sudden maturity, Cesca turned to Sue and gave her a thumbs-up. *Did you make her do that?! Don't teach her weird things!*



Duke Chapter II: Errands of a Grand Duke

I went around all the countries in the alliance and informed them of the stolen Frame Gear parts. That would at least make it clear Brunhild wasn't responsible in the event that they did try to attack someone using a makeshift version.

"It's suspicious enough that the location is shrouded in a magical barrier, but still..." There were way too many places that fit the bill. Castles, forts, and places that researched applications of magic all had barriers of varying intensity. I couldn't just search for them, either.

Not just big places employed barriers, either. There were other areas like royal treasuries and noble bedrooms. The barriers also wildly varied in power, but even the weaker ones were good enough to nullify basic spells. Even the weakest versions, the pocket talismans, were good enough to prevent my paralysis spell.

No matter where they were holding the pieces, I was doomed from the get-go. I had no choice but to actually find the location and see it with my own eyes. But even then I might not be able to see it if the magical barrier was an advanced one that also put up a mirage.

Either way, there was no point worrying about it. All I could do was carry on with my daily life.

"The Hangar has some vehicles in it, right?"

"That's like, totally correct. Our Hangar is equipped with such masterful works as the Babylon tanks, ultra-speed dirigibles, state-of-the-art drilling machines, and so on. But they totally gotta run on lots of Ether Liquid and stuff, so that's pretty lame..." I was speaking to Monica, who was in the middle of making last-minute adjustments to Yae's Frame Gear.

"Couldn't we use them as support units for Sue's Frame Gear or something? Like... we could attach them on to a Frame Gear base, and combine them."

"I do not believe it could be done without extensive remodeling to the Frame Gear. Seems like a total waste of resources and stuff. Could we not just build an extremely large Frame Gear? Why do we need to add detachable combinations?" Monica tilted her head to the side.

Well, I get what she means, but... Bah, I'll just have to show her. It's too hard to explain.

I called over Rosetta, and showed both her and Monica a few episodes of the anime that I'd previously shown Sue.

They didn't seem all that impressed at first. However, their bodies gradually inched closer toward the projected screen, and their perplexed frowns turned to fascinated grins. I stared at them, worrying if I hadn't just started something bad.

Don't think, feel. Follow your heart.

The two of them looked like they'd been struck with a flash of divine inspiration. They immediately began working on a Frame Gear that could combine with vehicular parts. They kicked reason to the curb, and went beyond the impossible.

...Of course, this is my power... Anime doesn't exist in this world... I'll use it to show people things they could've never imagined... Anime will ensure I build the greatest Frame Gears!

"So, you're building Sue's Frame Gear next?"

"Yup. It'll take a while though, since we're making a unique system for it. Your frame'll come right after, Yumina. I promise."

"I don't mind waiting, honestly. Besides, if mine comes last, it'll probably be the best, right?" She wasn't wrong to think that. If I continued making new discoveries and improvements, I could probably perfect them with the final custom Frame Gear.

I was relaxing in my castle with a nice cup of tea. A long-awaited moment of rest, in fact. Yumina was by my side, sipping from her own cup.

"It's been a while since we've sat like this..."

"Yeah? Well, I've been pretty busy since I founded Brunhild..."

"That's not exactly what I meant. I just meant it's been a while since it was only the two of us." Yumina gently rested her head against my shoulder.

Mmh... I get it. Even throughout all the time at Reflet and the Belfast Mansion, we hadn't had many moments of tenderness like this between us.

"Moments like this are rare, so... might I ask you to spoil me a little...?"

"Hm? Spoil, huh...?" Yumina's eyes were closed, but her face was looking up at me. I knew what she was asking for. I smiled softly and placed both hands on her shoulders, then pushed my lips up against hers.

After a while, our lips parted. Her face was flushed red, and she hugged me tight.

"Ehehe... You're all mine today, Touya..." I never thought I'd be in a situation where I'd be getting used to this kind of thing. I wasn't sure how to feel about it.

I'd come to another world... I'd gotten myself eight brides-to-be...

All of them younger than me, too... Well, except Leen, who was considerably older.

“Something’s changed lately, you know?”

“Hm? What’s up?”

“My Mystic Eye. You know how I can see through people’s intentions? Well... recently I’ve started... feeling different effects...”

“Different... effects? What?”

“Well...” Yumina drew back from me, then gave me a little nod.

“Touya. Let’s play rock paper scissors.”

“Huh? That was sudden... Is this something to do with the new effects?”

“Yes. Let’s play it, slowly.” I’d taught the game of rock, paper, scissors to the others, but I had no idea what she wanted to show me.

“Alright... Rock, paaaperr... scissors!” I lost. Yumina motioned her hand, starting the next round.

“Rock, paper... scissors!” I lost again. And then again. Repeatedly. No matter how many times we played... I lost. I didn’t remember Yumina being so good at the game... but it also didn’t seem like she was using any kind of practiced technique. It probably had something to do with the effects she’d mentioned.

“You can... win the game using that new power?”

“It’s a little hard to explain, but... Well, how should I put it... I can just... Well, I just know what you’re going to choose.”

“Like... mind reading or something?” *Is she a telepath now? That’s a little scary! I won’t be able to keep anything to myself anymore... If I cheat on her, she’d totally know right away! Uh... not that I would cheat on her or anything. Wait, are you reading my mind right now?! I didn’t mean it, I swear!*

“I can’t read minds or anything, no. It’s more like... Seeing? I can sort of see what your hand would look like in a few seconds. It’s blurry and vague... but I can definitely see a little bit into the future.”

Whoa... Foresight? That’s incredible. Even if it’s only a couple of seconds, that’s amazing! Still, why does she have a power like this...? Wait... Could it be an extension of that thing Karen told me about? She’s receiving my love, and I’m a Demi-God, and she’s also family with Karen and Moroha, too... Come to think of it, that’s not the only change I’ve noticed lately. Sue’s become prodigal as a Frame Gear pilot, Lu’s become a way more adept fighter... I mean, it’s definitely a good thing... It’s just hard to comprehend!

“Shall we test it a bit?” I put several coins in my right hand and closed a fist. The aim was to have Yumina guess how many coins there were.

She got it immediately. Every time. I decided to change the experiment by using **[Apport]** to subtly transfer the coins from my

right hand to my left. She got it wrong. That confused me a bit, though. I wondered if my use of **[Apport]** changed the intended future somehow. Still, I only made that move because I knew about Yumina's power. If she'd known I'd do it, she would've said there'd be no coins. But if she'd said there were no coins, I wouldn't have used **[Apport]** to move them... In either circumstance, she would've lost.

It seemed like her foresight wasn't quite iron-clad. But I definitely wouldn't want to know the future if I couldn't change it. Knowing you'll break a bone in five seconds will hardly do you any good if you can't do anything to avoid it.

It seemed like the future could be changed if someone other than Yumina was doing the changing. At the very least, it could come in handy if she saw enemy attacks a little bit in advance. Still, I was pretty sure with how limited it was right now, it probably wouldn't come in all that handy.

It was currently more like a really strong intuition rather than seeing the future. It wouldn't be worth getting overconfident about it.

"There's something else, too..."

"Seriously?!" Her eyes weren't in constant use, so I wondered if that was why they seemed to be developing new skills. In a way they were kind of like her own personal Null magic.

"Sometimes when I look at you, Touya... I see a very faint golden light emanating from your body. I also saw the same light coming from your sister Karen, but a bit stronger. Do you have any idea what that could mean?"

Wait a sec... Can she see the divinity? Not even I can see that! Then again, Karen said she could see it since it's leaking out of me and stuff, but... Damn.

"Ah... Well... I wouldn't worry about that for now. But please let me know if you see that light on anyone except me or my sisters." Yumina could end up being helpful in finding that servile god my sisters were after. Then again, it probably wouldn't be that easy. Karen and Moroha already said they'd be able to sense the moment any divine power was used in this world.

Yumina looked at me with suspicious eyes, but eventually she just shrugged and sighed.

"Very well, then... I don't understand the details, but I'll do as you ask."

"I'm sorry. I promise I'll talk to you about it properly soon."

"Indeed. I'll hold you to that, okay?" Yumina finished talking and rested her head against my shoulder again.

Geez... even though I said I'll explain it, I don't really know how. 'Oh gee guys, I forgot to tell you I'm actually a guy from another world and I was killed but the ACTUAL GOD OF THE UNIVERSE resurrected me here

and now I'm a God-in-training too. That cool?' There was no way that'd work out. I wasn't sure if they'd even believe something like that.

From what I understood, there was some kind of rebirth spell in this world, though it was exceptionally rare... That might be easy enough to explain, but... There was the matter of me being from another world. I'd be very upset if they considered me an entity like the Phrase.

Plus, there was the fact that I'd be ascending as a God eventually, too... I was really just scared about how to tell the people close to me about my extremely unusual circumstances. I didn't know what they might say.

"Ah! No fair, Yumina! You can't monopolize Touya! Aren't we sisters-in-arms?" Lu entered the room and saw the two of us. After fussing a little bit, she sat on my opposite side and hugged up to me much like Yumina was.

"Goodness me... I didn't really monopolize him for very long." Yumina stuck out her tongue, smiling softly.

I had two beautiful flowers, one in each hand. I began to feel embarrassed. It wasn't quite as frightening when it was just one-on-one.

"Ohoho, oh my... Are you having a good time with your harem, Master? You shouldn't forget about me and my sisters, you know?" Cesca walked in after Lu sat down, bringing her usual sardonic commentary in tow.

"What do you mean by that..."

"You should pat our heads... Or hold our bodies close to yours. Or get some rope and bind us real tight... Then spank us. Rip our clothes off, ah... Mh... A-And pour candle wax all over our squirming nude bodies... Mmh!" Cesca's breath grew ragged. She started to writhe. She was a complete lost cause.

"D-Does Touya like that kind of thing...? Uhm... I-I'm inexperienced, and it's embarrassing, but if he does, I-I could do it..."

"Y-Yes... Me too... I-It'll be my first time, s-so be a little gentle... But I'd d-do that..." The two girls by my side blushed deep crimson, muttering absolute nonsense all the while.

"DAMN IT!!! My tastes aren't like that at all! Don't listen to her!" *Leave your fetish crap outta this, Cesca!* I forced the pervy robo-maid out of the room. For some reason my manhandling just made her breathe even more heavily.

"Mm!!! More, please..."

Quit moaning! Quit it!!!



"This is-a one of the Phrases' soundwaves. Here is one of-a the

Intermediate Construct-a sounds, and one of the Upper Construct-a sounds. These-a sounds can be hard to hear, but they're clear as day before they come out! But if we use this machine we should-a have no trouble identifying them." Parshe, clad in her shrine maiden garb, sat in the storehouse flipping through various floating screens. She'd been doing a lot of research into Phrase wavelengths since the last battle.

"So we can use this to determine where they'll come out and when, right?"

"Ah... That's-a quite the tall order, but maybe. We can measure the spatial-a tear, figure out how big it is, and how fast it's widening. We might-a mess up by a range of about two or three days, but it should-a be close enough." Two or three days was a fair bit when dealing with enemies like the Phrase, but it still seemed acceptable enough.

"So we can use this data to create some kind of Phrase-detecting radar, right?"

"I can-a probably do it, yes. But don't expect-a the range to-a be so good." Even being able to sense them was a boon, regardless of range restrictions. If we made multiple radars, we'd be able to cover more ground as well. I decided to talk to Rosetta about it right away.

She was in the middle of making Sue's Frame Gear, but the radar definitely took higher priority. If we knew where they were gonna be coming out, we'd be able to adapt and defend.

I went up to the Workshop to talk to Rosetta about making a Phrase Radar, but she got angry at me when I brought it up.

"No, sir! I'm just one person, sir! I can't simply do this, then that, and then this and that at the same time!!!" Let me correct myself. She actually got kinda furious. Still, it was understandable. We didn't exactly have a surplus of workers. There was a good deal of minibots, but she could've probably done with more support.

"Indeed. It seems you've come to me."

"...Indeed I have." In the end, I went to the Rampart to ask Liora for help. Though it was more of a case of me having no real alternatives. I couldn't ask the clumsy moron or the book-obsessed moron to help with a delicate matter.

"Very well indeed, then. I did indeed work as Doctor Babylon's assistant for a good deal of time, so this should not indeed pose a problem." I was right to rely on the eldest sister of Babylon. She at least had a level head. I wanted her to ease Rosetta's burden, if only a little bit.

"Where's Noel?"

"She is indeed asleep."

"Surprise, surprise... Oh, Crea made her this boxed lunch. Give it to her, would you? There's some for you, as well." I passed over two

hand-wrapped lunches to Liora. Liora's was a standard size, but Noel's was about five times the size of an average person's lunch. Her gluttony was enough to put Yae to shame, after all.

All Noel did was eat and sleep, so I was surprised she didn't get fat. Though, that was probably because of the fact that she was a humanoid machine.

"You have our most indeedilous gratitude. We may not require food to function, but we do indeed appreciate the taste of a well-cooked meal." Liora gave me a little smile. Liora, Noel, and Fam didn't really come down to the surface all that often.

On the contrary, I would've preferred if Parshe didn't stray down... Just the other day, she burned up one of the curtains in the castle hallway. Her clumsiness was far too much trouble.

I headed back down to Brunhild Castle, where I came across Sakura and Kougyoku.

Sakura's memories were still completely absent, but it kind of seemed like she didn't really care all that much.

I'd never lost my memories before, so I couldn't exactly judge, but it struck me as odd that she didn't seem to be all that interested in who she used to be.

I always had one of the Heavenly Beasts accompany her when she walked around due to her unknown identity, but I'd recently felt that it probably wasn't a necessary measure any longer.

"Ah, Grand Duke. I'm glad you're here!"

"Hm? Did you need something?" Sakura rushed over to me. She seemed a little more panicked than usual. It was definitely rare for her to have anything other than a neutral expression on her face. She suddenly grabbed my hand and started running along with me in a certain direction. It was definitely out of character for her.

"Wh-What's going on?!"

"There's an ill person, my liege."

"Huh?" Kougyoku caught up by flying alongside us. So it seemed like Sakura was worried about this unwell person.

"We found a collapsed individual on our walk around the castle town. We brought them to the Silver Moon, but the situation is rather precarious due to their rare illness."

"What illness?"

"Demoderma. It's a sickness that only afflicts demonkin. Though it doesn't have a high rate of infection and can only spread through direct contact, we must keep all demonkin in Brunhild away from the patient. Demoderma causes several horrible symptoms, and death is certain after about a month." Sakura, still yanking at my arm, explained the situation.

You sure know a lot about this... Did you read the medical textbooks

in our castle's Library or something? Guess we've got another book maniac like Fam.

Regardless, a sickness that affected demonkin could only mean one thing... The patient was one of them as well.

"But what does this have to do with me? Shouldn't you just ask Flora?"

"Demoderma counts as an affliction, but it's almost impossible to cure. Still, that Null magic of yours, **[Recovery]** ... it may be able to, well..."

Now I understood. My **[Recovery]** spell was made for dealing with afflictions like poison and paralysis, as well as any abnormal bodily conditions like blindness or deafness. I even theorized that kidney stones could be removed with it, too. Cancer was even a possibility, but I didn't know anyone in this world with it.

Even though I could do all that, I was still incapable of curing the common cold... I didn't really know why, so I didn't think it affected diseases. But I'd been informed that it just might work with demoderma.

If that was the case, we needed to hurry up.

I wondered why I wasn't summoned telepathically, though. I was later told by Kougyoku that Sakura suddenly started dashing toward the castle when she found out. She must've been too concerned to think.

I opened up a **[Gate]** right in front of Sakura, and we were at the Silver Moon in a flash.

Fleur guided us up the stairs and we ended up in the furthest room on the third floor. There was a girl laying in bed there.

Her body was wrapped in a torn-up cloak, bandages covering almost all of her skin. Her skin looked like it was originally brown, but it was crusting and flaking into a reddish-brown mess and falling down on to the bedsheets below her. The flakes looked thick, and almost metallic. Her silver hair looked completely disheveled and dirty.

Her face was covered entirely by bandages, but I could tell she was a woman. Her chest was bound, but her large breasts rose up and down as she gasped heavy-yet-shallow breaths.

Good lord, she looks awful... Her skin's either peeling off or red and sticky...

"Is she even alive...?"

"Demoderma is a disease that gradually hardens the body. The skin peels off, becomes thick and coarse, and peels off again... Eventually their entire body seizes up and becomes so stiff they can't even move. After that comes... death. There's still time to save her, though. Please, use your magic." At Sakura's behest, I hurriedly used

[Recovery] on the girl.

The girl's skin was wrapped in a soothing light, and her skin quickly peeled away. I thought something had gone horribly wrong until I noticed her skin regenerating healthily afterward. Healthy tan flesh peeked out from between the bandages. It was a complete success.

While I was at it, I cast **[Refresh]** and revitalized her. And with that, she'd be able to regain her physical strength.

Fleur removed her bandages and wiped the girl's face down with a wet towel. She was uncovered, revealing a brown-skinned girl with pointy, knife-like ears.



“A dark elf...”

“Yes...” Sakura nodded. She had ears much like Guildmaster Relisha’s. However, this girl’s skin was an oily brown, and she had long silver hair.

“Dark elves count as demonkin? Does that mean Elves are demonkin as well?”

“Hm? No... Elves and dark elves are completely separate races. They look similar, but are quite different. Elves excel at magic and have fair skin, while dark elves are more adept at physical techniques and have darker skin.”

“Do the species have some kind of deep rivalry or mutual hatred, too?”

“Not to my knowledge...” Seemed I was wrong on that count. Reality was, after all, quite different from my superficial knowledge of fantasy tales.

The girl was incredibly beautiful, though. I wondered if elves were simply beautiful as a racial trait. *Hmhm... Most interesting...*

“A-Ah... I’m about to wipe her body down...”

“Yeah, sure thing. Make sure to get any flakes of hardened skin off her.” I nodded to Fleur. It’d be best to get her looking her best as soon as possible, after all. However, Fleur didn’t move to start her work at all. Instead, she just kept staring at me for some reason.

Something on my face...?

“Uhm... W-Well, Your Highness... I’ll need to strip her down, so...” Fleur’s nervous words finally clicked in my head.

Ah, wait! Don’t misunderstand! I just didn’t realize! It’s not like I’m trying to peek on her or anything! I swiftly turned a smooth one-eighty and walked the hell out of that door. There was a rumor going around about me being a lusty king with eight fiancées, I didn’t want to make that any more credible! I left the Silver Moon, entrusting the dark elf’s safety to Fleur and Sakura.

“Good grief...”

“Your Highness!” I turned toward the voice, only to see a band of demonkin knights charging my way. Samsa the ogre, Lushade the vampire, Lakshy the alraune, and the two lamias, Mulette and Charette.

“I-Is that girl okay?”

“Yeah, don’t worry about it. I cured her disease, so she’ll be up and about soon.” It seemed like my voice gave everyone some measure of relief. They all heaved deep sighs and patted their chests.

Isn’t this an overreaction? Is it just because she’s a demonkin too?

“Do you guys know her or something?”

“No, she’s just a fellow demonkin, that’s all. We have to stick

together. Racism and persecution is rife in the lands outside Xenoahs, after all. Besides, demoderma is a terrible sickness..." Lushade muttered anxiously.

It was a sickness that only affected demonkin... She was probably wearing those bandages not to obscure her face, but for the sake of other members of her kind. She'd wrapped herself up to minimize the chances of infecting another...

"But still, something must've happened for a dark elf to stray from our demon kingdom..."

"What do you mean?"

"Dark elves, much like vampires, are a species that prides themselves on longevity. Most of the nobility in Xenoahs are dark elves or vampires, you see." So that meant the girl in the Silver Moon was probably several decades old. She only looked to be about twenty, though.

As I muttered in confusion, Lushade told me he was over sixty as well. *What the hell?! Aren't you only twenty-something?! Didn't you say you wanted to join Brunhild so you could be more independent? Do vampires still live with their parents at sixty or something?* I didn't really understand demonkin all that much.

From what I understood, noble demonkin suffering from demoderma in Xenoahs were cared for by humans or demi-humans and basically put under house arrest until they died a month or so later.

I wonder if that dark elf got the sickness on her journey or something... Coincidentally, she managed to make it to Brunhild, but she surely would've died if she hadn't made it here...

Something niggled at the back of my mind, though... Was this really just a coincidence?



"Ooh..."

"So these are ours...?" Yae and Hilde let out happy noises as they looked up at the two Frame Gears before them.

One of them was large and purple, somewhat resembling a samurai. It was based on the look of traditional Japanese armor, with a crescent moon on its helmet. The helmet was like the one worn by Date Masamune, a legendary warlord from the Sengoku Era. The Frame Gear itself was equipped with a waist-mounted odachi, and a wakizashi. Both of these traditional Japanese blades suited Yae's style. There were also thrusters on its legs for increased mobility.

I'd also fit its magical ability slot with an **[Accel]** enchantment, allowing incredible speeds. She'd be able to dash through the battlefield and cut enemies to ribbons with boundless precision.

What it lacked in defense, it more than made up for in sheer power and agility. The Phrasium blades would ensure nothing was free from its cutting force.

This was Yae's very own Frame Gear. I christened her Schwertleite.

Next up was the orange Frame Gear. It was more of a traditional armor-clad knight, primarily orange but with black decorations. It wielded a huge shield and a mighty longsword. If Yae's was a Frame Gear built for speed, then Hilde's was a Frame Gear built for defense.

It had what almost looked like a dorsal fin on its back. The fin would transform into an enormous broadsword for emergency battles against Upper Constructs. I used **[Modeling]** to ensure it could extend to almost triple length.

This was Hilde's personal Frame Gear. I named her Siegrune.



Both girls climbed aboard their Frame Gears and began to test various functions. They swung their swords, ran around, and basically made sure everything was operational.

“The reaction speed is far better than it is inside the Knight Baron, it is... It feels almost as though I am moving my own body, it does.”

“The power is far beyond that, too... Now I know I’ll be able to fight an Upper Construct!”

“Don’t get ahead of yourselves, now. Remember, the enemy could have all kinds of stuff up their sleeves. Your greatest weapon is being prepared for the worst.” These new Frame Gears were far from unstoppable. I wanted to make sure Yae and Hilde’s Frame Gears could withstand that energy beam attack I’d seen twice now, but I wasn’t entirely convinced they’d even be capable of tanking something like that.

We’d been consolidating our data, though. And I was hoping we’d have enough to make Sue’s Frame Gear capable of that defensive feat down the line.

We finished up the field testing for Siegrune and Schwertleite, then headed back to the castle. After that I met up with Sakura and Kougyoku. We went off to the Silver Moon to meet the girl again. An employee from the Silver Moon had dropped by to tell us that the dark elf girl had finally woken up.

We’d been informed that she was fully cured and had no further abnormalities. She’d even been eating well. I decided I should go see her just to be certain, though.

I knocked on the door and entered the room to find Fleur sitting on a chair, and the dark elf girl sitting upright in her bed.

As soon as Fleur introduced us and explained who we were, the dark elf girl immediately hopped out of bed and bowed her entire body on to the floor.

Hey, hey! That’s a little much!

“I have no words to convey to you the gratitude in my heart. Never in my life did I believe I’d meet one of your station, much less be healed by him. If you might accept me then I, Spica Frennel, pledge lifelong servitude to your house.”

Wait, seriously?! That’s way too much! Although I guess I did save your life, so maybe this is normal...

“Honestly, that’s really not necessary... You don’t need to worry so much. I’m just glad you’ve been cured. If you’d like, I can take you back to Xenoahs.” I’d briefly been there, even if just in the skies. Opening a [Gate] there wouldn’t be a problem.

“No... I... have no place in that country. I was actually hoping to find employment in this nation. It’s difficult for people of my kind to

find work in other nations, which is why I came here.” She laughed wryly after speaking. I wondered if she had a reason not to go home. From what I understood, dark elves were distinguished nobles in Xenoahs for the most part.

“Work, huh...? What are you good at?”

“Back in Xenoahs, I was a member of the military, and I also performed private bodyguard work on occasion. If possible, I’d like to find similar work in Brunhild...”

Bodyguard, eh? That definitely means she’s pretty special. Not just anyone gets to be a bodyguard. She’s certainly got the mannerisms of a stoic soldier, too. But that just makes me more curious about why she doesn’t want to go back. Is she a criminal or something...? Nah, that can’t be it.

“Grand Duke... Can we not hire her?”

“Hm? Ah... It’s not like she can’t join our knight order, but...” It was quite rare to see Sakura so energized about something. She was the kind of girl who did things at her own pace, so it made sense she’d have particular interests. Spica looked over toward me.

“It seems I’ve asked the impossible, haven’t I...?”

“Well, maybe... you could join our knight order as a rookie? We don’t really have anyone who needs guarding right now. The wages won’t be great, but they’d be steady. How about it?”

“I accept. I shall become your strength, Your Highness.” Spica stared straight at me with stoic resolve in her voice. Her eyes too, lit up with confidence and strength behind them.

“Alrighty then. For now, we’ll have you take the basic test. I can’t just hire you on the spot, after all. It’s a committee decision.”

“Of course. Thank you.” She bowed her head once more.

Alright, c’mon... Enough bowing.

“...I’m pleased.”

“As am I! Thank you so much, Lady Sakura.”

“A-Ah... I’m just Sakura...”

“Hm? But you are a fiancée of the Grand Duke... I could never refer to you so casually.”

Nononononooo. Nope. That’s not it. Not a thing of it. No sir. No way, no how. I know I have a lot, but she isn’t one of them!

I explained Sakura’s situation, and Spica nodded slowly.

“Forgive me... I was unaware. Memory loss, is it? I’m so sorry, it must be a painful experience for you.”

“Not at all. In fact, this country is rather nice... Many good things happen here. You’ll grow to like it too, Spica. I’m certain of it.” Sakura spoke her words as if they were no big deal. Spica seemed puzzled at first, but her expression gradually turned into a smile. It almost looked like she was feeling something personal and precious.

“I was once told something very similar by someone else... Lady Sakura, you are a wonderful person, thank you... You actually remind me of a girl I once knew.”

“I’m no lady.”

“Apologies, but you are an honorable lady who saved my life. Should I forget the debt of gratitude I owe you, I would tarnish my honor. Even if the honor of my family is now low as mud, I still—” Spica suddenly closed her mouth. She put her hand up against it as if she’d said too much.

It sounded to me like something had happened in the demon kingdom to damage her family name. I neglected to press her for further information, though.

Her body was in good shape, so I decided to take her to Yumina. The first thing we’d do was make sure she was decent by having the Mystic Eye appraise her character.

I opened up a **[Gate]** and took us to the castle courtyard. Spica had never traveled like that before, so she looked around in wonder as I completely ignored her and had Kougyoku call Yumina over.

After a little wait, Yumina showed up. Spica immediately prostrated herself out of respect. Yumina wasn’t just my fiancée, she was also the princess of Belfast, so I decided not to freak out or anything. It was a standard show of respect.

“Please raise yourself. You are Spica, yes?”

“I am.” Spica stood up and looked directly into Yumina’s eyes. After a moment of silence was shared between the two, Yumina smiled.

“You seem wonderful. I’m certain you’re pure of heart enough to represent Brunhild as a magnificent knight.”

“Ah... Thank you?” Spica stood still and gave a confused thanks to Yumina. She didn’t fully understand what had just happened. Either way, she had the character approval.

“Let’s test your abilities next. Follow after me.” We exited the courtyard and headed toward the training grounds.

Everyone was training as usual, working their hardest. The knights who had been knocked down in their mock battles were stretching and doing cardio. *Wait... Waitii a second... There are way too many people here! Moroha! You beat down too many guys again...*

Everyone stopped what they were doing when they saw us, but I told them to continue training and not to mind us, so they did.

Either way, I could feel all the knights looking over toward us. Probably because of Spica, I guess. Dark elves were rare, and she was particularly beautiful. I wasn’t all that surprised.

“Alrighty then... Hey, Nikola.”

“Yes? Need me for something, Your Highness?” I called out to

Vice-Commander Nikola. He was seated on a nearby bench polishing his halberd.

It was a test for Spica, so I wanted to have him choose the most appropriate opponent for her.

After he chose the soldier, we headed to the weapon storage shed. Spica picked up a sword and shield. She balanced them both in her hands and got a good feel for the weapons, then we headed back.

She and the opponent that Nikola had chosen bowed to one another and prepared to fight. He was wielding a short spear.

The match began, and Spica found herself on the receiving end of a flurry of thrusts. She blocked each and every one with her shield and, finding a gap, jabbed her sword toward her enemy's chest.

Not a single attack had managed to land on her. She smashed her shield forward against her enemy to stagger him, and then swept her foot against his legs, knocking him to the ground.

She held her sword down against the throat of her fallen enemy. Victory was hers.

"The Shieldguard technique, it is."

"Yep, it's Shieldguard." Yae and Hilde began murmuring to each other. They caught me off-guard. I didn't even know they were nearby!

Shield...guard...? I mean, sure she's guarding, but what's special about that...?

"It is a special technique employed by guardsmen. It is different from standard swordplay, it is. The focus is on defense and parrying, it is. That, and preventing the enemies from advancing. It is a technique that prioritizes control over attack."

"Yeah, it's amazing... She shifts her body to block all the attacks, and completely renders the hits useless. She totally ruins the enemy's posture and causes him to stagger. It's a difficult technique to master, for sure."

Hm, so she makes her enemy waste energy and effort. Something like that, huh...?

So long as she maintained her defenses, she could guide her enemy into a situation where battle would be favorable for her. After driving her foe into a corner, she'd have free control over his movements. It was a way of incapacitating without killing, all without dropping one's guard. Even killing the enemy would be easy after closing the gap, though.

"So she needs to wield a shield, or..."

"Or her power is diminished, it is. Considerably so." Parrying with a sword was possible too, but it would be a lot more difficult to control the flow of battle. A technique built around shields... I had to admit, I was intrigued.

“Sword techniques that make use of shields are uncommon. The Frennels are one of the demonkin families that have mastered the art. They’re one of the five families that act as advisers to the overlord of Xenoahs.” Sakura spoke up as she watched Spica’s success. She sure was well-informed.

“Or at least, that’s what I read in a book. The Frennel family is renowned. It seems she’s related to them.”

“Ooh, I see. But why would someone from such a noble house come all the way out here?” There were likely reasons why she couldn’t talk about it, so I didn’t want to pry. Regardless, she was definitely a good person at heart, Yumina had proven that. If she was trying to start a new life in Brunhild, then I wasn’t going to stand in the way of that.

I looked toward Nikola, and he nodded in affirmation. Spica was inducted to our knight order that very day. Here she’d find a new beginning, and a new life.



“Hm... So she’s from the Frennel family, is she? Sss...”

“You know them?”

“Naturally. They’re one of the five military adviser families of Xenoahs, and their Shieldguard technique is well-known. Sss...” The two lamia sisters, Mulette and Charette, were clearing up a little in the castle, so I’d stopped to talk to them a bit. They were working directly underneath old man Naito. He was in charge of agriculture and construction, so they handled documents, planning permission, and blueprinting.

Spica had been on my mind lately, so I decided to ask them a bit about her. After all, they were demonkin like her.

She was clearly from a prestigious household, and her ability was nothing to scoff at either. It had me curious about why she’d leave Xenoahs, even if I didn’t want to pry about it directly.

“The Frennel family are direct bodyguards to the royalty of Xenoahs. Sss... Each member of royal blood, including the overlord, has a member of the Frennel family attached to them like a personal shadow guardian. At least that’s how the rumors go. Sss...”

“So Spica might’ve been a bodyguard for one of the royals in Xenoahs?”

“I’m not sure. Sss... As far as I know, male members of the Frennel family are assigned to male members of the overlord’s family. Same for females. But from what I understand, there are no female members of the royal family right now. Sss...” Mulette crossed her arms and furrowed her brow, as if she was trying to think hard. Her tail lightly rapped against the ground.

Wait... That is Mulette, right? Or wait, is that Charette... These two look way too similar...

Elze and Linze were twins, but they weren't identical. When I asked the two lamias about being identical twins, they looked at me like I was an idiot and said their scale patterns were completely different. I didn't notice, though.

"So wait... That means the overlord doesn't have a wife or anything?"

"If I recall correctly, his first and second wives died of sickness. Sss... Each of them birthed a prince, but no princess. Sss..." That made sense enough. So in other words, there were no female royals to assign female Frennels to, which meant that Spica probably hadn't served as a royal bodyguard. That didn't really answer what she meant when she talked about her family being disgraced, though...

"Do you know of anything that might've disgraced the Frennel family lately?"

"No clue. Sss... We left Xenoahs long ago, after all. Sss..."

Hmph. My investigation didn't really bear any fruit in the end. Still, that didn't matter too much. I didn't want to invade her privacy too deeply.

I said goodbye to the lamia sisters and headed to the training grounds. Spica was there, breathing heavily and dabbing her forehead with a towel.

"Yo."

"Y-Your Highness? Do you require my services?" Spica got up from the bench and bowed down to me. I really hated dealing with military-minded people like her. I told her to stand up right away.

"How are things? Settling in okay?"

"I am, thank you. Everyone's been treating me very kindly. They don't care that I'm demonkin, nor that I'm a woman... It's very refreshing." There were definitely more female knights in Brunhild's order than there were of other nations. We had a lot of demi-humans in comparison, too. Not including Mismede, of course.

"Still, the might of this nation's army is certainly a wonder. I was caught by surprise."

Well, that's because we work so hard... Kinda like Sparta. They all get worked to the bone. Frankly, I'd have been surprised if my soldiers weren't especially strong.

"A-And Lady Moroha's power is, well..." Spica shuddered slightly, as if she were reliving something unpleasant.

"Ah... So you've already faced her?"

"If I might be honest... she completely shattered my confidence as a soldier. My Shieldguard technique was entirely useless. It made me realize just how much I relied on it succeeding..." Moroha wasn't

exactly a fair measure of strength to compare oneself to, though. If humanity treated her as the standard, then they'd be taking on a challenge they'd never be able to surpass.

Spica bringing up her technique had reminded me of something I'd been told by Sakura, though. She said that the Frennel family used a unique kind of shield.

"Ah, it's a dome-like shield with a slight curve. There's a sharp protrusion in the center, too. It's primarily used to stab."

"Hm, I see." I took out some phrasing from **[Storage]** and promptly used **[Modeling]** as well. *Let's see here...*

Spica was taken aback by my sudden usage of the spell, but quickly regained her composure.

"Sorry to trouble you, but the curve is a little less steep... And could I trouble you to make it a little smaller, as well...?"

"Hm..." I made the adjustments as she requested. Then, I used **[Gravity]** to reduce its weight, and put on a few generic strengthening enchantments for good measure as well.

Spica took the completed shield into her hands and lightly dusted her fingers over it. After that, she took a combat stance and began to thrust and swing it here and there.

"The shield's crystal-like material means my view isn't obstructed... It's also exceptionally light and easy to handle. Thank you, it's wonderful."

"That's not all. The material is extremely durable, so it's not likely to ever be damaged by an enemy weapon. I've also given it an enchantment that slightly absorbs and counters magical attacks that hit it." I hadn't given Spica a complete set of standard Brunhild knight equipment, so I took the opportunity to make her a sword and a suit of armor. I didn't do anything special to those, though.

"This armor... This blade... If only I had something so powerful back... Back then..." She muttered something sorrowful. Though I heard her words clearly, I decided not to pry any deeper on the subject.

"Master." Someone suddenly spoke up behind me. I turned to find Cesca, clad in her usual maid outfit.

"A priority message has come from Rosetta. The current project is complete."

"Oh, wow. Faster than I expected." I really thought it'd take quite a bit longer than that. But that was good timing. I'd be able to debut it during the afternoon's alliance meeting.

I said a brief goodbye to Spica and headed off to Babylon with Cesca.

"Interesting, Touya... This artifact can detect the presence of Phrase activity?"

“Bet your butt it can, Relisha. I call it the Sensor Plate.” It was a kind of liquefied crystal that had been solidified and turned into a black tablet.

The tool could predict how many of the Phrase would appear, exactly what type they were, approximately what time they’d appear, and their exact location.

It didn’t have much of a broad range, but one was enough to cover Brunhild. Larger countries like Belfast, Regulus, and Lestia would need multiple to cover their full territories, though. Even Lihnea would need a little more than Brunhild’s one.

“I’d like to have these installed in every guild in the registered nations. We can have adventurers handle the lesser types that appear. If any intermediate ones appear, we’ll notify the government and have the Frame Gears deployed. If an even stronger one appears, we can call on the alliance for aid. Provided there’s enough of them to handle, at least.”

“The guild wholeheartedly approves of this plan. We’d like to avoid another Yulong incident, after all.” Guildmaster Relisha smiled as she spoke. She was seated around the alliance round table with the world leaders.

I sought out the guild’s cooperation, because they were prominent in every nation. That included nations that weren’t part of the alliance. Their information network was also something to be desired.

The current plan was to request cooperation of the government of any nation we get an alert from, if they weren’t in the alliance we’d try to open up fair diplomacy and convince them our Frame Gears were necessary. Of course, they could still choose not to believe us. But they’d have a hard time denying the truth when it stood in their country and made mincemeat out of their citizens.

“Hmph... Wonderful. We’ll be able to prepare for them well in advance now.”

“That reminds me... Those fragments of the broken ones... Phrasium, was it? Sounds like a pretty useful resource to have.” The Emperor of Regulus gave his approval as the beastking mused about how to make use of the crystal debris. Naturally, I’d told the other leaders about what made phrasium so unique. They’d noticed the material used by our knight order and some of our Frame Gears anyway, so I had to.

We also decided that the country that ‘hosts’ the Phrase invasion would receive eighty percent of the material, and I’d receive the remaining twenty as a rental fee for the Frame Gears. Obviously I wouldn’t get any if they took out the Phrase without using my power, though.

Phrasium had three qualities that made it especially useful.

It increased in density and hardness directly proportional to how much magic was poured into it.

It regenerated itself constantly until its magic reserves were depleted.

It could amplify spell power if it was used as a magical catalyst.

That last point was especially interesting. The body of a Phrase acted much like a spellstone, but had no particular type affinity and was much more conductive to magical amplification.

The only issue was how much it weighed, and mass producing them. I couldn't reduce their weight with **[Gravity]**, and I couldn't get them to change form on the fly with **[Modeling]**, either.

The material could be cut, so that wasn't the issue. The problem was in reforming it. Still, it seemed like the other nations would be able to make a scalemail-like armor out of it by combining smaller pieces and looping them together.

Then again, they'd have to produce a ton of magical power to get it hard enough. The material also gradually became more resistant to magic, requiring more magical power poured into it over time. It was a case of diminishing returns.

Somewhat like an RPG, when you level up. You'd need more experience points to get to the next level.

I never felt anything like magical resistance, though. My power freely flowed into anything without me really noticing. To be fair, I'd never filled anything up to the absolute limit. Though that did make me wonder... Would an item break if you poured too much magic into it?

"Now then, today's meeting..."

"Excuse me, but I have something to report." Just as I was about to end the meeting, Doge Audrey raised her hand. I wondered what she wanted.

"I thought I should let you all know. Just a few days ago, Edgar Bowman escaped from his prison camp. You all know Bowman as the man responsible for the recent Golem rampage in Roadmare."

Wait, he seriously escaped?!

"It seems as though his escape was orchestrated from the outside. We haven't yet found his whereabouts, so I thought you all should know in case he crossed the border."

So wait... He didn't just escape, someone let him out? Who did that...? Well, I guess it makes sense. Even if he's irritating, he's still known as a genius. He was probably saved by someone in exchange for his cooperation.

"Run search. Magical Researcher, Edgar Bowman." A map was projected into the air, but not a single pin fell down with it.

"Search complete. No matches." *What...*

“Is he dead, or... What does this mean?”

“It could be that he’s dead and his corpse isn’t recognizable. Or it could mean he’s in a place with a magical barrier. Or he’s carrying a portable magic-blocking charm around.” I couldn’t exactly voice just how bad of a feeling I had about this. It wasn’t exactly a sense of fear or anxiety... It was more the feeling that something was definitely about to go wrong.

Like my dead grandpa used to say, “There’s nothing more dangerous than a self-righteous fool.”

I couldn’t help but feel the same.



Just three days after I handed over the detectors to the guild, we had a reading. It was three lesser constructs, in a port town to the northwest of Refreese. A group of Refreesian adventurers ended up taking them out.

The lesser constructs were manageable for Red adventurers. Though it’d probably be a bit of a challenge.

Still, there was a problem in our system. Even if the sensors could detect how many there were and approximately when they’d come out, there’d have to be a constant vigil until they emerged due to our tools being imprecise. It was kind of a pain for the adventurers to hang around the breach zones for so long.

On the other hand, the guild purchased the phrasium from them for a very high price. The guild then went on to sell the phrasium to merchants from a certain fledgling nation...

Not anyone could take quests to go and kill the Phrase, either. They were only given to adventurers that the guild was familiar with and trusted.

It’d be terrible if someone half-assedly accepted the mission and just bailed.

Either way, I was glad to hear that the sensors worked. I didn’t anticipate any issues.

I also delivered some of the sensors to the tribes in the Sea of Trees by using the Rauli tribe’s network. They would receive word from the other tribes via carrier bird, and then Pam would pass on the message to me through her Gate Mirror.

It’d be really bad if any of the Phrase came out in the Sea of Trees, but that would be a problem for another day.

All I could do was hope the damage would be minimal before we could respond.

That was all there was to it.

“So, what do you guys think?”

“Ohoho... So this was... What did you call it, a trolley?” I was

standing in front of the leaders of the free world, explaining to them the item I had recently created. I'd spread out a railroad track across a plain in Brunhild, and set the basic hand-operated trolley atop it.

"Like I said, this thing moves along the rail if two people stand on top of it and move the handle up and down. It's a transport device, basically."

"I see, I see. It doesn't seem all that complicated. But it isn't able to carry much in the way of cargo, is it?"

"For now, you're right. But I'm planning on replacing it with something that can move a lot of cargo, fast. This is just a proof-of-concept to show you how things can move along this rail." If I just made a steam train immediately, people would freak out, or I would be held responsible for injuries incurred by people who didn't know to keep off the tracks. I decided that the best thing to do was to introduce the railroad itself first. Then, people would realize that heavy things moved along it, and accidents wouldn't be so bad if it was a simple trolley.

Cesca and the other gynoids told me that trains actually existed in the ancient world. So really it was more like bringing back a long-lost technology that was in this world to begin with, rather than introducing an alien technology. Though from what I understood, those trains were extremely noisy and powered by magic.

"Creating a route should be easy enough by flattening the land with earth magic. We should be able to easily transport ore from the mines with these rails, too."

"Hm... That's true."

"But there are certain regulations I need you to stick with. Specifically, the railroad tracks need to be a certain width, no matter what the country. If we had a single railroad that went from Refreeze to Roadmare, it'd be easier to exchange goods and finances. You wouldn't want to waste time adjusting tracks and vehicles, right?" Rail width was typically measured as gauges... The most commonly used width in the world was the standard-gauge track, around one-thousand-and-thirty-five millimeters. The one used in Japan was known as the narrow-gauge, around one-thousand-and-sixty-seven millimeters wide. Bullet trains used the standard-gauge though, so that was the one I went for in this world.

My grandpa's job was actually measuring the width of railroads. He often told me just how important it was. Heat or cold could cause the metal of the rail to expand or contract. You needed to pay attention to the most subtle of distortions in the material, or trains could derail pretty badly. He used to tell me over and over just how important his job was.

"Our country doesn't share borders with your nations, though..."

King Cloud of Lihnea raised his hand. He wasn't wrong. Lihnea was on an isolated island, and only shared borders with Palouf to the north.

"That's true, but a standardized global rail size will be helpful if you purchase rail carts or rails from other nations. There's no need to make a unique width just for your rails."

"Well, that's fair." I also decided that we'd lay out two tracks side by side. One for one direction, and one for the opposite. This would reduce risk of head-on collision. After I finished explaining everything, the world leaders went off to have their usual fun.

They happily went back and forth along a two-hundred meter rail, riding back and forth on the trolley. *Are you children or heads of state...?*

The two women present, Doge Audrey and Her Holiness the Pope, didn't participate though.

Instead, they were carefully examining the blueprints I'd given everyone. They were already coming up with plans to lay tracks down.

Roadmare and Ramissh were right next to each other, after all. They were only separated by a large body of water. If they could build a bridge and put a railway track on it, trade would likely flourish between the two.

Funnily enough, the Beastking of Mismede and the Emperor of Refreese ended up getting too excited. They made the trolley go way too fast, which resulted in it crashing even though they tried to apply the brakes. As a result, they ended up losing control and falling out. I used Healing magic to patch them up though, so no harm was done. It was actually a good hands-on exercise of what an accident could be like. I think they learned their lesson.



The season would soon turn to spring. The days were getting warmer and warmer, so winter was behind us.

The warmer season also brought more travelers to Brunhild. The streets of our castle town gradually became quite busy.

There were many adventurers who came over seeking to conquer our dungeon, and merchants came along to arm those adventurers too.

I was a little bit worried at first, but it seemed like my country was finally flourishing.

"Milord."

"Hm? What's up, Tsubaki?" I was suddenly spoken to by a cat sitting atop a fence. It wasn't one of my summons, though. It was an example of the Takeda clan's ninjutsu. To be more specific, this ability allowed you to redirect the location of your voice. The real Tsubaki was likely hiding nearby.

I thought it'd be fine if she just came out and spoke to me directly, but she was a ninja, so I figured it was just her preferred kind of style.

"I've received some news that you may be interested in hearing. A war has broken out in Eashen."

"Seriously? How big of a war are we talking here?"

"As you are aware there are eight feudal lords. Chosokabe, Mori, Shimazu, Oda, Hashiba, Tokugawa, Uesugi, and Date. I have heard that Chosokabe lost to an allied attack between Oda and Hashiba, and their territory is now forfeit. After that, the lord of Oda, Oda Nohbunaga, was assassinated. Then, the leader of Hashiba, Hashiba Hideyooshi, claimed Oda's territory and became the largest force in Eashen. The Tokugawa house has formed an alliance with Date to resist him."

Oh...? So the Oda Nohbunaga of this world was killed like the Oda Nobunaga of my world, huh...? I'm not all that surprised.

"The one who killed Nohbunaga... Was he called Akechi? Did it happen at a temple in the middle of the night?"

"...Yes, that's correct. A man named Akechi Mitshuhide turned on him at Honnoji Temple... How do you know this?"

"Ah, just a feeling."

Yup... Eashen wasn't exactly a mirror of my feudal Japan, but there were some similarities indeed. I hadn't ever heard of an alliance between Date and Tokugawa.

"So what's up with the Hashiba army?"

"They're forcibly controlling Mori and Shimazu's territories at this point. The remaining independent powers are Tokugawa, Uesugi, and Date... However..."

"What is it?"

"The Hashiba army is moving eastward inland toward Eashen, but they're building warships on the western coast. Our scouts believe they are attempting to build a naval fleet capable of conquering Yulong."

Huh... That's familiar... If I recalled correctly, there was a period in Japanese history where Hideyoshi attempted to conquer Korea and China... That was real dangerous for Yulong in their current weakened state, though.

"What's happening in Yulong right now?"

"Succession disputes and bickering in their royal court. Many nobles are presenting children they claim to be the illegitimate offspring of the former Heavenly Emperor. It's all fragmented now, similar to how Eashen was some time ago." As I thought, it'd be bad news if Hashiba invaded Yulong. They wouldn't be able to take all of it, but I had a feeling they'd be capable of taking a strong foothold.

But, if I was entirely honest... I didn't really care all that much

about Yulong.

Yulong had largely been left alone due to its devastated position. A lot of people were worried about the Phrase emergence that occurred there.

A large concern was that if another nation moved in and took the territories, it might suffer a similar fate if the Phrase came back. The countries around Yulong didn't have the capabilities to repel the crystal invaders, after all.

There were other nations that weren't interested in interfering with Yulong at all, as well. The Demon Kingdom Xenoahs, and the Kingdom of Horn, showed no signs of interest in the territory. There was also Hannock, who didn't want anything to do with Yulong, but I couldn't exactly rule them out either.

Roadmare had no intentions of conquest, it seemed. But, there was definitely a chance that Felsen or the Nokia Kingdom could be galvanized to move against Yulong if they saw Hashiba's army invading as well.

In the worst case scenario, war could break out between the three, with Yulong as the battleground. It also seemed to me like Eashen was far behind many other countries in terms of national power, too.

"Is there any news out of Felsen or Nokia?"

"Not at this time, no. Felsen is bordered with large nations, like Roadmare to the west and Lestia to the south, so I doubt they'll make any bold moves." That made sense enough. I wondered if the Hashiba house was moving their army because they were aware of that situation... Or maybe they had some kind of goal in mind.

An island nation wouldn't be able to take full control of a mainland territory, after all... Their sudden motion was unusual.

"What kind of man is Hideyooshi, anyway?"

"I don't know many details. He got close to Oda after being granted feudal lord status by the Emperor. But, just after they formed an alliance, conflict broke out between them. From what I've been told, he's a small man with a monkey-like face. He also carries a golden gourd. None have seen him but the people of Hashiba, however."

Nobody's seen him? Weird... Is he that wary about being assassinated? In Japan's history, Hideyoshi was pretty outspoken and flashy, but I guess this world's Hideyooshi isn't. I heard the story in a little more detail, and I heard that he had stuck to Oda like a shadow and stayed largely out of sight before the betrayal.

I also heard a little more about the Emperor of Eashen. I heard that the Emperor didn't have the power to reel in the individual feudal lords, but I wondered if Hideyooshi had been appointed because the Emperor recognized him or something. If he wasn't strong, he

wouldn't have been able to become a feudal lord, after all.

"What about Ieyahsu?"

"He is busy with Date, and is trying to negotiate with Uesugi. Uesugi has military might that rivals Takeda... At least, Takeda as it used to be... Ieyahsu believes an alliance with them will help them repel Hashiba."

Geez, what a pain... I kind of thought Ieyahsu would have unified Eashen with little resistance.

"What should I do?"

"Wait for the time being. If it looks like Hashiba is going to make a serious move on either Ieyahsu or Yulong, then update me."

"Understood." The cat on the fence suddenly let out a small yawn, and Tsubaki's presence was gone.

It seemed like a lot of things had been happening lately. I thought it might be a good idea to visit the Takeda house and speak with Ieyahsu myself.

I didn't really have any ties to anyone in his territory, but Yae's family lived smack-bang in the middle, so it was my business.



"So, what do you think?"

"Wonderful. Wonderful indeed." Old man Naito was standing next to me. The two of us were looking at the newly-constructed clock tower.

We erected it in the castle town's main plaza. In other countries, only the elite had clocks, so they could determine the time by the chimes they heard. But I decided to build the tower in the square for all to see, because time was important to keep.

Plus, I'd seen this very clock tower in Brunhild when I saw that future vision with my fiancées some time ago.

It was kind of like the Big Ben in London. The official name for that tower used to just be The Clock Tower, but its formal one nowadays is the Elizabeth Tower.

I had found an enormous clock in the storehouse, so I installed it atop the giant tower. The face of it was enchanted with light magic, which made it glow even in the darkness. The numbers were written in the ancient language of Partheno, but it was a similar twelve number system to the one most of the world used anyway, so it was easily read.

Even if there weren't any chimes, people could tell the time by looking at the tower. I'd put clock faces on all four sides, after all. The only place you wouldn't be able to tell the time from was directly beneath.

I wanted this clock tower to be a symbol of my castle town, kind

of like how Big Ben was a symbol of London back on Earth.

“Oh my, what a splendid construct...”

“Oh, Olba. Hey there! Arma, too?”

“It’s been a while, Mister Tou— I mean, uh... Your Highness.”

“Touya’s just fine. It’s nice to see you.” I turned to greet Olba, the Mismede merchant, and his daughter Arma. Their foxy ears were idly twitching as they spoke.

Olba visited Brunhild often, but it was rare for me to see Arma here.

“I’ve come with a shipment of metal. Arma’s school is currently on break, so I promised her I’d show her your fine nation in person.”

“Oh, great!” Olba used my revenue based on sales of stuff like the baseball gear and my other ‘inventions’ to pay for steel and other metals. The metals were then brought to Brunhild as raw materials to make Frame Gears.

“Ah, and about the request you put in earlier...”

“Hm? Did they fall for it?”

“In Felsen, yes.”

I see... Felsen... Interesting, interesting...

Frame Gears required rare materials like orichalcum in all of their parts. Compared to the other raw materials it hardly made up the most, but there was still quite a lot of it inside a single unit. The amount of orichalcum in one Frame Gear could produce about ten longswords.

I hypothesized that the first thing the Frame Gear thieves would do was disassemble the parts they took to learn the structure. Then, they would attempt to build their own afterward.

That was where Olba came in. I boldly requested him to circulate a large amount of orichalcum on the rare metal market. But in truth, it was a plot to find out who would buy such a suspiciously vast amount of the stuff. We set up a fake company and everything.

Precious metals like orichalcum didn’t appear on the market all that often, after all. Even if it did, it was typically a really high price.

We spread a tactical rumor about an eccentric merchant who only dealt in orichalcum, as well as several excuses as to why we wouldn’t sell smaller amounts.

People typically only asked for enough to make one sword. Orichalcum was not only rare, but also difficult to process. We also listed it at a price much higher than market value, so there weren’t many customers who were interested in what we were selling.

However, that was the trap. Because if someone still wanted to buy it... They’d be very suspicious.

“The group that bought it is the Lao Workshop. I ran some checks, and we haven’t got any record of such an organization. Once the

orichalcum passed Felsen's borders, I was powerless to investigate further..."

"Why's that?"

"Their country doesn't have a mercantile guild. Everything there is managed by the Magical Chamber of Commerce and Industry." The Magical Chamber of Commerce and Industry... Felsen's mages, craftsmen, and merchants were all managed by that enormous guild-like organization. Olba was powerless to investigate because it was a domestic organization, and not an international one like the mercantile guild.

"So you don't know who purchased the orichalcum...?" It was suspicious no matter how you looked at it. They must have had considerable financial backing, though...

I had no way of knowing if it was a governmental conspiracy, or just some individual lunatics. Either way, they were probably the people we were looking for.

The orichalcum I sold was only genuine at face value, by the way. It was actually iron that I had weight-adjusted by using **[Gravity]**. The exterior was plated with a golden material. Still, I wasn't some kind of crook. I did lodge several valuable gemstones inside.

I didn't want to give the thieves any actual orichalcum, but I also didn't want to cheat anyone out of their fair purchase. That being said, they did cheat me in the first place by stealing my Frame Gear parts... I probably didn't need to include the gemstones at all, huh?

The only issue was that I didn't know if it was something done by the Felsen government, or just some splinter group. It was troubling to think about. Felsen was also the nation that had the most Yulong refugees living in it.

"The Felsen Kingdom is famed for their magical engineering and artifact research. They're known well enough for the eastern half of the continent to be known as Lestia's Blade and Felsen's Mysticism." That reminded me, some strange magic was obscuring the looks of the thieves during the initial hit. Could that have been the result of Felsen research? It was true they were a highly advanced nation, but I didn't think they'd be capable of producing a Frame Gear or anything.

I didn't have any conclusive evidence that implicated Felsen. However, it was very likely that whoever did steal my stuff was operating out of that country.

"Olba, please let me know if anything unusual comes out of Felsen. I'll be in your debt."

"No need to be so polite. I'm always happy for an opportunity to earn more profit, and I think if I asked any more of you I might incur some kind of karmic penalty."

"Oho? Well, if you must know... I have a special flask that can

preserve hot drinks and soups for extended time periods.”

“I’d love to hear more!” I opened up **[Storage]** and fetched a thermos flask I’d recently created. It was fairly easy to make if you had someone capable of wind magic, since it was just a case of making a vacuum inside the flask. It wasn’t as effective as the thermos flasks from home, though.

I drew out a little diagram on the ground while explaining the basics. Naito also appeared from somewhere and started intently listening to my explanation. Arma looked fairly bored, though, so I opened up a **[Gate]** and sent her to see Yumina.

I gave a few of them to Olba, along with a disassembled one to show him the basic structure. Old man Naito also asked for one, so I gave him my personal thermos.

It made sense that he’d want it given the amount of outdoor work he did. I felt a little guilty for not thinking of him sooner.

After that, I used a **[Gate]** to move a few of the metal shipments to Babylon’s Workshop. Then, I said goodbye to the two of them. Olba went off to his store branch in Brunhild. Naito happily walked off with his thermos. He was surveying a new construction project.

I was about to head back home through a **[Gate]** before I saw a few familiar faces in the castle town. I stopped in my tracks and called out to them.

“Howdy there! How are you guys?”

“Huh? A-Ah, Your Highness?!” The young adventurer, Lop, turned to me and dropped the spear in his hands. His three companions also reacted with similar surprise. The only one that didn’t show much of a reaction was the small white mouse riding atop one of the girls’ heads. She hurriedly stopped, so he almost fell down off her head, though.

It was the rookie adventurers I’d met on the slaving ship. Lop, Fran, Eon, and Klaus. The white mouse atop Eon’s head was also one of my summons.

“Has the little guy been of help to you?”

“Yes! Snow tells us when magical beasts are on the prowl, and also detects traps for us!”

“Heh... Not bad, little guy.” The white mouse stood atop Eon’s head and twitched his whiskers.

...Did he seriously just rub the back of his head awkwardly...? You really are a smart mouse.

It seemed like the group had named him Snow. Well, he was a snowmouse, so that made sense.

“We were promoted to Purple just yesterday, actually!” Fran, the swordswoman of the group, happily reported her news to me.

That’s good! They’re advancing pretty quick. Guess they’re rookies no more.

Dungeon exploration didn't contribute toward your guild promotions, since it wasn't a quest. However, discovering new floors, chambers, monsters, treasures, and hidden rooms and then reporting them to the guild would get you points towards your next rank.

Guild Ranking went like this: Black -> Purple -> Green -> Blue -> Red -> Silver -> Gold. It wasn't all that hard to get from Black to Purple, but it was still an achievement in itself.

"Snow keeps finding hidden passages for us. We've found quite a few treasure chests now... One even had this inside!" Fran held out a mithril sword. It was old, but it looked like it was in good shape. It was definitely a valuable find.

"What are you gonna do with it?"

"Well, we all spoke about it and we decided I'd keep it and use it in battle. We went to great lengths to find it, after all..."

"You should sell it."

"Huh?" The four of them looked at me blankly, so I explained myself. They may have risen to Purple from Black, but they were still newbies. Rookie adventurers swinging around a mithril blade? That could attract attention. The bad kind. I didn't want them getting accosted by people who were after a quick cash fix.

"Oh, I see..."

"You should sell it because you might end up being attacked for it. You don't want to stand out, not yet at least." It was advice based on my own experiences. It'd be fine if they were strong enough to stand up against the people who'd come after them... But I wasn't so sure they were quite at that level yet.

"Aw... I-I like this sword, though..."

"But he raises a fair point. There's a lot of risk in keeping it. We should avoid endangering ourselves, Fran."

"I guess, Klaus..." Klaus, their bowman, seemed to have a good head on his shoulders. At least she seemed to understand what he was saying, even if it made her sad.

"Besides, can't you guys buy decent gear for everyone with the money you make from selling the sword? It'd be better to have a balanced party."

"...That's true. We all found the sword, so I shouldn't enjoy the spoils alone. Let's do it! Let's sell it." Fran seemed hesitant, but she finally agreed to follow my advice.

"Alright, then. I'll buy your sword. I'll pay you a little more than market price, too. Consider it a graduation gift for your purple status." I figured I'd give them about twenty golden coins to the kids, since I had withdrawn some cash lately anyway.

But then I kind of started to worry about them being attacked and robbed of the cash. Plus, the idea of giving roughly two million yen to

a bunch of thirteen-year-old kids didn't sit too well with me.

"...Or, if you give me the mithril sword, I could make you kids some new gear, just for you. How about that? What do you choose?"

"Seriously?! The gear, the gear!" Hook, line, and sinker. I felt a little bit guilty, in all honesty. Almost like I'd swindled the kids out of a mithril blade.

I decided to craft something worthy of twenty golden coins.

I went to the Silver Moon's backyard and opened up **[Storage]** to take out a bunch of raw materials. Then, I began using **[Modeling]**.

I made an armor and spear set for Lop, light armor and a sword for Fran, leather armor and a bow for Klaus, and a robe-and-staff ensemble for Eon.

I wanted to use mithril for the metal armor, but it didn't end up being viable. I ended up using reinforced steel instead. I also adjusted the weight of their clothing using **[Gravity]**. Outwardly it wouldn't look very different to normal armor. A person would only know about the enchantments on the gear if they wore it.

I coated the bladed edges of the sword and spear with thin phrasium. With that, their weapons would handle a little better, and cut a lot better.

I also enchanted Klaus' bow, so it applied **[Accel]** to any arrows it fired. Any arrows fired from it would be a lot more powerful. I also made a bowstring out of thread-like phrasium, and a bow that could actually handle it. For his leather armor, I weaved it with dragonscale for added protection. I put strips of leather in front of it, though. Outwardly, it just looked like normal leather armor.

Eon's cane was tipped with what appeared to be red and yellow spellstones. Her primary aptitudes were fire and light, but it was actually a cunning disguise. The spellstones were pure phrasium, colored yellow and red. It would allow her magical attacks to become much more powerful. I even weaved some phrasium into her robe as well, just to reinforce her a little. It wasn't visible, though.

I completed the fairly plain-looking gear, and then I explained the special qualities of each to them. Initially, they looked a little disappointed at the seemingly shoddy stuff, but they soon perked up after they realized just how powerful the equipment I'd given them was.

"Now listen up. You can't tell another soul about this stuff, alright? It's one-of-a-kind. Nothing like these exist anywhere else. If the time comes for you guys to finally sell them, then sell them to Olba Strand's company." I knew for sure it'd be worth more than twenty gold. The Strand Company had the finest appraisers around, after all.

The four of them thanked me, much to my chagrin, as I handed

them enough dragon meat to feed four people. Suddenly, the bell rang on the clock tower. It had just turned noon.

I told them to pass the meat over to Micah, asked her to treat them to a home-cooked meal, and then left in a hurry.

Lunch was waiting for me back at the castle, after all.



Interlude I: Of Gods and Men

“Hmm... I think he’s in the wrong here. You have nothing to apologize for.”

“I-I know, right?!”

“Quite right. Put another way, this just shows how little faith he has in you. In other words, he doesn’t trust you. He can’t believe in you because he thinks that if he were in your shoes, that’s what he’d do. He knows he’d definitely fail in your position, so how could he trust you?”

“You’re right... I think this helped clear up my doubts. I’ll break up with him. I can’t be with someone who doesn’t trust me.”

“Yes, I agree, that would be for the best. There are plenty of good men out there to choose from.”

“Yes! Thank you very much, Lady Karen!” The female knight rose from her seat, bowing her head respectfully as she left the room. Karen saw her off with a wave of the hand.

This gazebo-like structure at the corner of the training grounds was a popular relaxation spot among the female knights. Come noon, they could be seen carrying their lunches there.

However, on occasion Karen could be found seated there. At those times, the gazebo became a refuge where the troubled sought advice. Though it went without saying, her advice extended to romance-related topics only.

While it was women that mostly sought her counsel, at times men approached her for advice as well. That should come as no surprise, for love troubled all without regard for gender. But to receive advice from the Goddess of Love herself was something one could normally only dream of.

“I should think eavesdropping is unbecoming of a king.”

“Ha, so you did notice me.” I revealed myself, lifting my **[Invisible]** spell. Her expression was so earnest that it piqued my interest somewhat.

“You take giving advice more seriously than I’d have thought.”

“This is my area of expertise, after all. Knowing what one desires, what advice they wish to hear, is second nature to the Goddess of Love.” Karen puffed up in pride.

“Hmm? So what you just said there wasn’t really your opinion?”

“Of course it wasn’t. Well, to be quite honest, I don’t know if it justified breaking up, but that was what she wanted. She simply couldn’t bring herself to go through with it. I merely gave her the push she needed.”

Is that really okay...? But, well, when people seek advice, they’ve already found their answers within themselves. They simply wish for someone to judge and reinforce those answers. And through that, they can affirm they’re not mistaken. Maybe that’s all that love advice really boils down to. There isn’t a single, correct answer. It all comes down to the person in question.

“The order here has many female knights, which means just as many troubled hearts. Though that includes the men, as well.”

“You don’t say? So that makes you something of the counselor here, doesn’t it?” Roughly thirty percent of our knight order were married. Those were mostly soldiers given to us by Eashen, originally Takeda shinobi under Tsubaki’s command, in addition to men under the command of the Takeda Elite Four. Those were, for the most part, men.

The newly appointed knights, however, were mostly single.

In this world, one comes of age at fifteen, and by the age of twenty most are married.

But that applies only to the townsfolk. Adventurers in search of glory often only sought marriage after retirement, and married later on in life. Though, they may marry someone younger.

Many of the applicants to Brunhild were former adventurers, and as such being unmarried after the age of twenty wasn’t uncommon.

With this many single men and women in one place, one might expect them to hook up and marry, but naturally, things didn’t go quite as well as one might wish.

Put simply, our women didn’t seek marriage.

And within our order, they had reason to object to the prospect of matrimony. Typically, an order of knights consisted mostly of men. Female knights either didn’t enlist, and if any did, they were either nobles or joined through favors and connections.

But Brunhild had no regard for gender, so female knights were more common here compared to other places. Women who couldn’t become knights in other countries gathered here. Coming from such a background, they endeavored so as to not be inferior to the men, and marriage was of a low priority to them. The head of our order was a woman, in fact. Lain.

Many of them sought lovers but shunned marriage, like the female knight from earlier.

“Isn’t this bad for them, though?”

“Not particularly, no. But it is true that women are placed in a

disadvantage if they prioritize their position so much that their age catches up with them. Quite a few men prefer younger brides, not unlike a certain someone.” Karen grinned broadly. I walked right into that one. Though it was true my fiancées were all younger than me, besides Leen.

“Do they avoid marriage because they don’t want to start a household?”

“Well, that’s part of it. They’ve finally become knights, so they don’t want to give up on their careers. Even if both husband and wife work, once children come into the picture, everything changes. It’s a complicated matter.” Even though the order allowed its knights to be married, it was still an issue. We had no qualms about married women becoming knights. We could appoint them to a safer brigade that deals in the castle’s duties if they wish.

But it was true that children complicated things. They couldn’t leave their children in the care of neighbors all the time.

“We need a nursery...” *A nursery, or a kindergarten. I should consult Naito about building something.*

“That said, there isn’t much to do if they can’t settle on anyone to marry in the first place.”

“Settling on someone to marry, huh...? People usually marry out of love in this world, right?”

“Not necessarily. Nobles marry out of political convenience, and have their fiancées decided for them. Parents decide for children quite often, as well. Commoners usually marry out of love, but are often introduced to partners by their acquaintances.”

“Matchmaking, huh...?” Matchmaking or not, men and women needed opportunities to meet. As a rule, the knights were cooped up in the castle, with the exception of the ones on patrol. There was no way they could meet anyone the way things were.

“Maybe we could host a mixer or something?”

“Within the order? If it’s just among our knights, they see each other all the time. It wouldn’t bring anything new to the table.”

“I suppose it wouldn’t. They’re all colleagues, after all. If that’s all it took for them to get married, they’d have all hooked up by now.” In practice, we already had couples among our knights, and some that had broken up as well. Working alongside one’s ex-lover could be difficult, and some have to be reassigned to different postings.

“So we’d have to bring people from outside the castle, huh...? How about the castle town?”

“There’s plenty of adventurers from that dungeon earlier, but they’re wanderers, so getting them to settle down would be difficult. I doubt they have marriage in mind.”

That would be difficult, indeed. I didn’t think finding someone to

pair with our male knights would be that hard. After all, knights were a respectable class. They got a housing allowance if they married, and could build a house with a loan. As far as professions went, they were pretty well off.

"I wonder if it's that hard to find someone for the female knights, too..."

"That's not an issue you can solve overnight, either way. You would have to make the order a place where the knights can marry with the peace of mind it wouldn't get in the way of their careers." That was painfully true, even if I didn't like it.

The order would only get bigger as time went on. And with that, we'd have more and more female knights compared to other countries. We needed a solution. I knew better than to make an enemy out of women.

"Yo, what're you two talking about?" Moroha approached us, carrying a wooden sword on her shoulder. Even though she'd been helping our knights with their training all morning, she didn't seem to have broken a sweat.

Well, she is a goddess, after all...

Moroha took a seat alongside Karen. I pulled cold beverages, complete with drinking straws, from my **[Storage]**, and placed them in front of the ladies.

"Hmph... Marriage, is it? From the looks of it, that's the last thing on their minds right now. Everyone's up and about, trying to liven up the country." Moroha spoke up, sipping fruit juice from her straw. I was glad everyone was doing their hardest for the country, but I couldn't stand the prospect of them giving up their chances at marriage for that.

"Making the order an easier place for married knights to work in is a good idea, but they can find someone to marry on their own. It's not your place to try and help them with that."

"I guess you're right."

Playing matchmaker suits one's grandmother more than their leader, I suppose. After all, some people marry without any prodding, while those that don't probably wouldn't even if you try to help them.

"And any help coming from you, with your eight fiancées, would probably ring very hollow."

"Definitely." The two ladies nodded in agreement. Once again, I walked right into that one.

"By the way, everyone's been wondering about this, but are you really going to have nine children?"

"Well, I don't really... know for sure, but apparently that's what's going to happen."

"We're going to be aunties in a few years, Moroha. Time really

does pass by in the blink of an eye..."

No, I've only known you two for less than a year. And you're already going on about how you'll never let anyone call you "aunt." You're getting way ahead of yourselves...

"Things are going to become quite hectic once your kids are born, Touya. A great many gods are going to offer their blessings to them."

"No doubt about that. The World God is a given, and Moroha and I will help them. Even the onlookers from up there will surely give you their blessings."

"Are there really that many gods out there willing to bless us?"

I heard from the World God that the Gods of Agriculture and the Hunt have taken an interest in me, but how many are there?

"Well, we have fewer gods compared to other worlds. In your original world the God of Amusement and the God of Invention gave their divine protection left and right." In that case it wasn't so much "divine protection" as it was lending talent. It seemed that Earth was quite beloved by the gods. Many geniuses, heroes, and great men were born, and helped make the world a better place.

They may have brought on strife at times, but those were necessary acts for society's development.

The God of Magic didn't seem to have any interest in my home world, though. *I suppose given it doesn't have any mana to serve as the foundation of magic, it makes sense he wouldn't take interest in our world.*

"Originally, this world didn't attract a lot of attention from the gods compared to the multitude of other worlds. The God of Amusement lost interest in it straight away. The other gods only started caring about this world once you showed up, Touya. Until then, this world was fairly neglected." I could tell that much. There wasn't much religious activity in this world, and for having an history this long, most of its cultures have stagnated. The World God did say that if he hadn't thrown me into this world, he'd have left it be for another ten thousand years or so.

A world forgotten by the gods... Has a depressing ring to it, really.

"We haven't forgotten about it. That's disrespectful. We just haven't checked up on it."

"Hey, I've kept an eye on it. If I had to pick, I prefer this world to Touya's original world, at least."

"Well, being the Goddess of Swords, you would pick this world over an Earth that prefers guns and missiles." *I bet the God of Magic prefers this world to mine, too. I'm sure he's given his divine protection to people here in the past. Come to think of it, Professor Babylon may very well have been one of them...*

But in the end, the gods were fickle. Worlds that received their love and attention prospered, while those that didn't stagnated. And if

something were to draw their interest to a forsaken world, perhaps that would accelerate its development.

I want to believe that if me being here drew the attention of the gods for even a bit, it'll be in this world's favor.

"Which reminds me, isn't the girl that recently joined the order receiving divine protection, as well?"

"Who? Ah, you mean Spica." The dark elf Spica, who nearly died from demoderma. I heard that ever since joining the order, she'd been showing off quite the talent. Well, given she spent day and night being trained by Moroha, it was no surprise she was getting stronger.

"So her divine gift is the Shieldguard?"

"Yes. She probably doesn't know it herself, but she's receiving the protection... the talent of the God of Shields. Like me, the God of Shields has a liking for this world."

If there is a sword, there's bound to be a shield. Since a shield is something one cannot cut through.

"I wonder if the God of Shields is peeking in on us right now, too." I found myself looking up to the sky. Surely the other gods weren't looking on us all the time.

"The God of Shields didn't seem very interested in you. You don't use shields, after all."

"Well, I use the **[Shield]** spell fairly often."

"That falls under the God of Magic's jurisdiction. The God of Shields is hard to please, and won't give you his blessing unless he really takes a shine to you." That meant he must like Spica a lot. That said, while gods could bless someone with talent, it was up to that person's perseverance and effort to make it bloom.

Even if the gods were to bless my children, those talents would go to waste if they end up being layabouts who refuse to put effort into anything.

That would come down to how I'd raise them... But they weren't even born yet. It wasn't my place to put that kind of expectations on them yet.

I turned to return to the castle, a hint of uneasiness weighing on my heart. But as I did, I sensed a surge of magical energy coming from the northern training grounds. The area had a designated field for live Frame Gear training, and a field dedicated to magic training. It wasn't unusual for someone to be using it, but who would it be? I went there to check, and found Leen and Linze, alongside Sue and Renne, our maid-in-training.

"Ah, Touya."

Having noticed my presence, Linze ran to greet me. In her hands was a book of some kind.

"Hey. What are you guys doing here?"

Sue and Renne focused their magic on the target in front of them, and Leen made sure their magical energy didn't run amok. Paula was running around too... yelling or something.

"We're practicing our magic. Sue is working on her Light magic, and Renne on her Wind magic. And I'm practicing this." Linze presented the bulky tome she was holding, but I couldn't read the letters on the cover.

Is this ancient spirit script...? I activated **[Reading]** to try and make sense of it.

"Encyclopedia of Composite Magic...?" *Composite Magic? That's a field I haven't heard of before. Some kind of ancient technique?*

"Composite Magic is a school that focuses on combining two types of magic and utilizing them at the same time. For example, there's a spell called **[Fire Storm]**. Originally, it was a composite spell of fire magic and air magic. Over time, it was simplified into what is now known as the **[Fire Storm]** spell of the fire element. In its original form, it was far more powerful."

"Ah, so it degraded." To be exact, it didn't degrade so much as it changed into a spell a common practitioner can cast.

Even if you were to put up a race car only an F1 racer could drive for sale, the common people could never use it. You'd be better off selling them an easy to handle, light motor car.

And eventually, the race car would lose its place to the otherwise inferior model, and in time be forgotten entirely.

"Hmm... It's certainly interesting. This **[Invisible Arrow]** spell seems useful." I named a spell that caught my eye as I flipped through the tome's pages. It almost sounded like cheating, though.

"Yes. That's a composite spell of Light magic and an arrow type spell. I believe even I can cast it." Linze spoke up cheerfully, but it looked like a fairly high-level spell. Using Composite Magic required proficiency in multiple types of magic, otherwise it wouldn't work.

"Come forth, o Light! Shining Duet: [Light Arrow]!"

"Come forth, o Wind! Swirling Duet: [Wind Arrow]!"

"Impressive." Sue and Renne fired their spells. Several arrows of Light and Wind, perhaps too weak to be called a barrage, fired at the targets. And for both, only one met its mark and destroyed it. The other arrows failed to hit their target and dispersed.

"Not bad. See, barrage magic doesn't require aiming too carefully, because one of them will probably hit the target. But still, if you're firing these kinds of barrages, try to have every arrow hit. Like this."

Leen recited an ice barrage spell, and all the arrows crashed into the target one after another, leaving the target in pieces at the blink of an eye.

"Wow, impressive! No wonder they made you Brunhild's court

magician... Oh, Touya!”

“Hey there. Good job, you two.” Sue and the others rushed over to me, having noticed I was there. Sue had an aptitude to Light magic, but before meeting me the most she could cast was an elementary **[Light Orb]** spell.

Seeing her work so hard to improve drove home how hard she was searching for what she could do.

“I see you’re working hard too, Renne.”

“Yep! I-I mean, yes! Lapis said that a first class maid has to know how to fight, too.”



What in the world is our head maid teaching a kid...? But maybe that's to be expected, given that she formerly served in that intelligence unit.

Leen walked over to us as well, and suddenly came up with a suggestion.

"You came at just the right time, Darling. Could you teleport a Fang Boar here?"

"Huh? I could, but what for?"

"To finish up today's session. Combat training to illustrate the difference between a mobile and static target. And also, the castle is running short on some ingredients."

A Fang Boar was a magical beast also known as a Long-Tusked Boar. As its name implied, it had long tusks, and was a worthy challenge for fledgling adventurers. Its meat sold for a good amount, so much so that newbies in the guild scrambled for the chance to lay their hands on it."

But its violent charge was a force to be reckoned with. One could be severely wounded if they took it lightly.

"Just the two of them against a Fang Boar? I'm not so sure that's a good idea..." I sneaked a concerned glance at them. Leen heaved a sigh and parted her lips to speak.

"There is such a thing as being too overprotective. They've been growing stronger and more mature by the day. And if things turn sour, the two of us can take care of it." That was true enough. Leen was a tougher teacher than I thought, though.

"We'll be fine, Touya. Believe in us."

"That's right! Everyone's been teaching us and we really have gotten stronger!"

Hmm... They're really insistent on it, so maybe I should just let them try it. Like Leen said, if it gets too dangerous, I'll just defeat it myself.

I looked up a Fang Boar's location in my smartphone, and found one in a nearby forest. It was walking around within the country, so I could use the **[Gate]** spell to bring him from anywhere.

Let's do it, then.

I teleported to the forest I found the boar in. The Fang Boar was cautious of my sudden appearance, but I opened a **[Gate]** on the ground beneath him and dropped it into the training grounds.

When I returned, I found Sue and Renne already engaging it.

"C-Come forth, Wind! Bulwark of Gales: [Air Wall]!"

"Bugah!" The wall of wind that Renne created repelled the Fang Boar's charge.

"Now, Sue!"

"R-right! Come forth, o Light! Shining Duet: [Light Arrow]!"

Sue's arrow just barely missed its mark. The knocked back Fang Boar recovered and darted into a rush, avoiding the three arrows fired toward it.

"Wh-Why you!" They fired a few more shots, but none hit.

There's no way they can do it like this. They're not thinking ahead.

"Come forth, o Wind! Swirling Duet: [Wind Arrow]!" Renne fired an arrow barrage of her own, but the arrows all missed just like Sue's. Even if they try firing indiscriminately, they'll never hit...

"Wha...?!" As the Fang Boar rushed past, an arrow wheezed right besides me.

That almost hit me! The two of them are getting so worked up, they can't even see what's going on around them.

The Fang Boar switched from flight to fight, and started charging toward the two of them. I shifted my focus to Renne and Sue, my defensive spells at the ready.

Sue began chanting her spells.

"Shimmer forth, Light! Dazzling Brilliance...!"

Oh no....

"[Flash]!"

"Buah?!" A blinding flash of light erupted from Sue's hands.

I was fine since I instinctively shielded my eyes with my arm, but the Fang Boar was directly blinded and scurried away in a panic.

Sue then fired more arrows toward it. Like before, none of them hit, but the Fang Boar's movements were certainly duller.

"Buahoh!" One of the arrows finally hit its mark, and sent the Fang Boar tumbling. As it tried to get up, Renne fired her magic arrows at its neck, and the boar fell silent.

Whoa, they actually beat it.

"Yes! I did it!"

"Alright! Great job, Sue!"

"...Sixty points, I'd say." Leen abruptly cut their cheering short.

She's strict... I think at least seventy would be fair.

"Seventy points, I'd say."

Linze isn't going easy, either. True, it didn't go as smoothly as a hunt should, but that's what you'd expect from first-timers.

"What did we do wrong?"

"For starters, you take too long to invoke your spells. You have to take your invocation time into account if you want to shoot down your prey. There's no getting around that. Renne has to consider her surroundings better. You almost hit Darling back there. And then there's Sue. Casting **[Flash]** wasn't a bad idea, but you have to let your companion know ahead of time. You got blinded and couldn't react too, right, Renne?"

"Y-Yeah. Everything went bright all of a sudden..."

“O-Oh... I’m sorry, Renne.” Sue apologized dejectedly.

“Hitting a moving target requires that much more invocation speed and precise control. You need to have a clear grasp of the situation, especially when fighting as a party. A mage must always stay calm and collected.”

“Understood!”

“Yes, I understand.” The two nodded at Leen’s words. They weren’t offended... That was good.

I pulled a cart out of **[Storage]** and placed the Fang Boar on it.

It was still alive, but it couldn’t move.

“Alright, let’s take him over to Crea. We’ll cook him up real good.” We needed to dispose of it before the day was up. Didn’t want it to spoil. Sue and Renne pushed the cart together and rushed toward the castle happily.

“Those two sure have grown.”

“We gotta keep working hard so they don’t surpass us before we know it.” Linze pumped her arms, as if to fire herself up. She was a hard worker, so I didn’t think they’d overtake her that easily, but she was right. We had to keep improving too.

“By the way, will you be making her Frame Gear now that you’re done with Yae’s and Hilde’s? What kind is it?”

“Yeah, Rosetta’s handling that one, but... I figured I’d take the airframe of the core unit and combine it with a support unit... Ah... Put simply, it’ll be a big one.” I doubted that the two of them could really understand what I meant, so I explained it succinctly. I never did show them that anime, come to think of it.

“What units do you two want?”

“I don’t really have any preferences... Oh, but a unit based on punching, like my sister’s, is a bit...” Yeah, that was probably too much for her. Linze’s Frame Gear was gonna be one more geared toward the support role.

“I’d prefer a unit that’s good for firing huge magic blasts. But magic doesn’t work on the Phrase, so that’s kind of pointless... I guess I’d like a unit that fights directly, over a support unit.” In Leen’s case, her magic wasn’t for hitting the Phrase directly, but to boost her attacks. Like dropping an **[Ice Rock]** from above, or propelling projectiles with **[Explosion]**.

Yeah... It’s certainly possible. Rosetta can take care of that. Hmm? I felt a tug at the hem of my pants, and looked down to find Paula at my feet, gesturing as if to ask “What about me, what about me?” to my face.

“Hey now... You don’t get to pilot.”

Paula shook her head in denial, and even got on all fours to beg. *When the hell did Leen program that...*

“No, I mean... your limbs don’t extend all the way to the pedals and the controls.” Paula fell over with a thud, as if realizing just that.

Did you really not know? Her acting skills were gradually getting more impressive. I thought maybe we could make a little money from putting her in a show or something. We couldn’t copy her, since the Workshop didn’t copy over enchantments, but if we could mass-produce Paula, we could make a theater troupe or something. They couldn’t talk, so we’d need a narrator...

As I entertained such silly thoughts, I left Paula behind. She was still continuing her act as I walked toward the castle.

Eventually, she noticed she was being ignored and tottered on after us.

Heh... Funny little thing...



Chapter III: The Golden Gourd

“This is pretty fast...”

“Right?” Babylon’s Hangar had a super fast flying boat in it, so I decided to take it out for a spin. I was currently in the skies above Regulus. Monica was piloting for me.

The name I’d given to this flying boat was Gungnir. It was quite a long vehicle that almost resembled a bamboo reed. As it sailed through the air it kind of reminded one of a winged spear, hence the name.

Even though it was flying, I couldn’t really figure out how it worked in terms of science or aerodynamics... So I assumed it was powered by some magical source.

Much as the name suggested, the flying boat was capable of soaring through the air above the ground, or on the water. It was pretty darned fast, too, but I was pretty sure I could go faster by using [Fly].

It could carry a maximum of twelve passengers at a time, though. The spacious interior was definitely a positive.

Originally it was powered by Ether Liquid, but we remodeled it and added new engine functions so it passively absorbed magic from the surrounding atmosphere, much like the newer model Frame Gears.

“This thing can combine with Sue’s Frame Gear, right?”

“Um, that’s totally possible, yeah! The rear end can do the transforming part, and stuff. Our presence won’t be necessary, as it has a fully autonomous autopilot system.” Gungnir had an autopilot too, one we’d recently installed. It had full voice recognition as well. You simply had to hop in and state where you’d like it to take you, and then it would! Still, it was a rudimentary system that couldn’t adapt on the fly, so relying on it too much wouldn’t be wise.

“We’ve like, totally installed a stealth cloak around the flying boat, too. Though its noises can still be heard...”

“Is Gungnir equipped with anything?”

“Uhhm... Nope! But it’s a rather sturdy construction. You could easily shatter a Phrase by ramming into it.”

Maybe for a Lesser Construct... I don’t exactly want any suicide attacks done against Uppers or anything.

Gungnir passed over Roadmare and flew through the skies of

Yulong.

“...This place is still a mess, huh?” I looked down and saw the remnants of the Phrase rampage. I saw scorched earth, ruined houses, uprooted trees, and charred devastation.

But even amidst the wreckage, I could see signs of life carrying on. I saw some villages well underway in their reconstruction efforts. It seemed that there were good and earnest people, desperate to live their lives in their homeland.

It almost made me a little sad to think that some of these people might consider me their enemy.

《My Lord.》

“Huh? Kohaku?” As I gazed down beneath me, a telepathic message came in from Kohaku. I wondered what she wanted.

《Lady Yae says she wishes to talk to y— Ghah! “Touya-dono, can you hear me?!”》

“Yeah, I hear you... Be gentle with Kohaku, okay?” Yae’s voice suddenly mixed in with Kohaku’s telepathy. Kohaku definitely yelled, which meant Yae had barged in. But what could have gotten her so worked up?

《I-I just received a letter from my mother through the Gate Mirror, I did! The Hashiba army is invading Oedo as we speak, it is! Th-The army has two-hundred-thousand men, and the Tokugawa-Date alliance has sixty-thousand! N-Not to mention the fact that Ieyahsu-sama was wounded during the initial assault, he was!》

“Wait, what?!” The army Tsubaki had warned me of was already making its move. It seemed he planned to forcibly unify Eashen before moving on Yulong.

《I... I will ride in on Schwertleite and take out the Hashiba army, I will!》

“Wait! Don’t get ahead of yourself!” I didn’t want Frame Gears to get involved in conflicts between humans. Yae was too panicked to think straight. That was only normal, though. Her family was in grave danger.

“Monica, set a course for Eashen.”

“Like, sure.” I didn’t know where the battlefield was, so we just headed straight for Oedo. It would take about ten minutes to get there.

“I’m opening a **[Gate]**, okay?” I cast the spell, allowing Yae and Kohaku through to my location on the flying boat. It kind of felt like Yae had forcibly yanked Kohaku through with her, though.

“Touya-dono! I... Wait, where are we?” Yae let go of Kohaku and nervously looked around the inner room. Kohaku fell right to the floor and looked around dizzily.

“Guh...” Kohaku let out a little moan and grumbled quietly to

herself. Poor little thing...

"We're inside the flying boat right now. I was taking it on a test flight. We're on our way to Eashen."

"Th-Thank you... My father and elder brother have gone to the battlefield, they have." This kind of reminded me of last time. But they were fighting a much smaller, Takeda-led army back then.

Still, I wondered what was happening. It would've been better if I was going to help an allied country, but this was an internal conflict. Ieyahsu was just a feudal lord... I didn't really think Brunhild had any place in giving him formal support. If we used a Frame Gear in the fight we'd definitely be exposed, too...

It might end up being theorized that I was trying to make Eashen into a vassal state or something. Yulong would definitely spread rumors like that.

"Alright... I'll disguise myself as a masked rider who happened to be in the right place at the right time."

"...Masked?"

I took out some mithril chunks from **[Storage]** and made a crude mask. The mask only covered the top half of my face, kind of like the kind of thing you'd wear at a masquerade. I wondered if I should attach horns to the forehead or something.

Luckily for me, I had bought some Eashen-style clothing from Zanak. If I wore that stuff, I'd look just like a native Eashenese person. The outfit was made up of several parts, including white socks, wooden sandals, a haori jacket, along with hakama pants and an uwagi to cover my torso. I could've just used **[Mirage]**, but that would've brought across its own set of problems.

I cast **[Invisible]** on myself and quickly got changed. Yae was my fiancée, but I was still a little reluctant to strip down in front of her.

I had a katana with me, too. It was a prototype made back when I was creating Yae's Touka blade. I quickly nestled it into the obi sash about my waist.

I put the mask on to complete the ensemble, and with that I looked like a passing warrior in an oni-like mask. I thought I looked pretty damn cool.

"How do I look?"

"To me, Touya-dono... You look just like a person from Eashen, you do." She said that, but she still gave me a funny look.

What? The mask a little too much? Well... I guess anyone wearing a mask would look a little suspicious.

"Master. We're like, above the skies of Eashen and stuff." Monica's voice came in from the cockpit, making me look down from the windows. There were green plains and forests spreading far and wide, a stark contrast from the devastated Yulong I'd looked at earlier.

“I have heavy life signs detected in the northwestern plains of Oedo. It’s totally likely they’re uh, fighting right there.”

“Head there right now. Full speed ahead.”

“On it. It’ll take approximately one minute.” It wasn’t long before we saw a castle rising up from behind a hill. It looked mostly like a traditional Japanese castle, but I could see some western influence here and there. There was also a moat around it.

I could see tens of thousands of soldiers firing arrows at it. Some of the soldiers in the back row were carrying flags showing the symbol of a golden gourd.

This must be Hashiba’s army... There’s definitely not two-hundred-thousand here... Tens of thousands, sure... But these guys are probably just the initial wave.

Various soldiers charged across the moat’s bridge, carrying in their hands a wooden battering ram. They were smacking it against the inner gate. There were people inside the castle firing arrows at the attackers, but the wind suddenly picked up and diverted the flow of their shots. *I bet there’s a wind mage amongst the enemy...*

The wind continued to roar as the battering ram continued its work. Sitting around and watching wouldn’t help. I needed to move fast.

“Yae. Get inside the castle. Find Jutaro and Jubei and tell them that I’m here. Don’t let anyone else know, okay? Kohaku and I will stop the people outside the gate.”

“I understand, I do! ...Will it be okay if I go down there unmasked, will it?”

“It should be fine. Unlike Yumina and the others, our engagement was never formally announced or anything. Why? You want a mask?”

“This is no time for jokes, it is not. That would cause my family to worry, it would.”

...How? I used a **[Gate]** to send Yae down to the castle tower. Then I took Kohaku, waited for her to turn into her true form, and opened my own portal to the top of the castle gate.

“Huh?!”

“What’s that?!”

I jumped down from the gate, paying no attention to the bewildered men. Both sides were briefly surprised by the sudden appearance of an enormous white tiger and a silver-masked man.

“Outta the way, trash!” One of the commanding members of the army began yelling. Seemed like he wanted us out of the way alongside the gate.

The log came smashing toward me, and I held out my hand toward it.

“**[Power Rise]** ... **[Gravity]**!” A thudding sound echoed through

the courtyard as I stopped the log single-handedly. Then I lifted it, and the people holding on to it, high into the air. They were cast into the moat. I made my own body heavy with **[Gravity]**, and fortified my physical strength with **[Power Rise]**.

“What in the hell?!” The allied Tokugawa-Date army had been cautiously aiming their bows at me, but it seemed like they finally realized I wasn’t their foe. They turned their weapons back toward the invading army.

Kohaku let loose a monstrous roar, blasting away the Hashiba soldiers that remained on the bridge.

“This is a warning. Leave this place. Or else.”

“O-Or else what, huh?!” The commander barked hostility at me as he slowly walked backward. I calmly took my smartphone from my breast pocket, and checked if the targeting lock had been completed yet. It had. Naturally, my target was the enemy army.

“**[Slip]!**”

“Waugh!” In a flash, what felt like a light earthquake slowly rumbled beneath my feet. That made sense, given the vast number of people I had made fall over at the same time. I sort of wished I had a birds-eye view, because I bet it would have been hilarious.

The soldiers on horseback were fine, though. That was probably because the specific target of the spell was “The ground beneath the feet of the Hashiba soldiers,” and not anything else. That was fine by me, though. It wasn’t like their horses had done anything wrong.

“The hell are you doing?! Get up, idiots!”

“It’s a battle here, people! Come on!” The superior officers were all on horseback, screaming in anger at their own men. These idiots didn’t even seem to realize what was going on. People like those, who had no sense for danger, deserved to be hit the hardest.

“Guess I should move about a bit.” I took out an Eashen-styled Naginata from **[Storage]**, then removed the blade. After that, I cast **[Power Rise]** on myself again.

It’d be fine to paralyze all of them (except the ones with talismans), but that’d lead to problems. There were way too many to take as prisoners as war, and I’d not feel so great about allowing the Tokugawa-Date army to easily murder immobilized men.

My plan was to beat them so thoroughly that they’d be forced to retreat. And so, I hopped on to Kohaku’s back.

“Ready, Kohaku? We’re heading right into the belly of the beast.”

“As you command.” I spun my spear around and gripped it tight.

“Get ready for the Silver Oni, Eashen! Let’s rock and roll!”

Man... This is so cool.



We charged through the enemy camp. I brought down countless foes with my spear. Kohaku made a shockwave with her roar, blasting enemies away by the dozens. Then, we cut through a crowd of them with ease.

After that, we made a U-turn and I took a combat pose once more.

Damn... There's a whole bunch left. A whole damn swarm of these guys!

A sudden rain of arrows came whistling through the air toward us.

“**[Shield]**.” I deployed defensive magic, which made all the arrows bounce off me. They fell to the ground with a clatter.

Guess I'll charge them again. Just as Kohaku prepared to make another run, a young warrior appeared on horseback.

“Greetings to you, I am one of Hashiba's retainers. You may address me as Fukushima Massanori! Be warned, stranger! My prowess with the naginata is unmatched. I say to you, dark and mysterious Oni, that I shall not bow to the aura of terror you have cast upon our fine—”

“**[Slip]**.”

“Gwaugh!” His introduction was way too long-winded, so I cut it short. I'd cast slip on his saddle, so he slid right off and fell on his butt.

What kind of idiot monologues in the middle of a fight anyway? I think people might have named themselves on the battlefield in the distant past of my world, but I wasn't really so sure about that.

I heard murmurs around me, some calling me a coward, some saying that I fought unfairly. However, I didn't really care.

Personally, I thought I was brave! I'd charged headlong into battle and scattered the enemy army, making them go “Waaah! Save us!” and everything. They were the cowards! They had no right to call me names when they were way worse.

Even though I'd been sending them flying, more of their soldiers still rushed at me.

That Massanori guy got back up and lunged at me, so I dodged his attack and knocked him over. I was a little irritated at how crowded it was becoming, but I had a solution...

“Spiral forth, O Wind! Raging Sweeping Gale: [Cyclone Storm]!”

“Gaaaaaah!!!” A tornado kicked up in the enemy camp, blowing several soldiers into the sky. I kept my eyes on the storm as I continued to beat down more of Hashiba's soldiers.

“Wait, wait! I am Katou, one of Hashiba's vassals! You cannot—!”

“[Cyclone Storm].”

“Noooo!” Katou, or whatever his name was, flew away into the skies. I didn't really give a damn about anyone here, or their

monologues.

“What are you idiots doing?! It’s just a man and his animal! Skewer them! Stab them!” The enemy commander, atop a brown horse, ordered the foot soldiers to surround me at all angles. They all thrust out at once.

Kohaku was much faster than them, though. She jumped high into the air and avoided their spears.

“Come forth, Sand! Obstructing Dust Storm: [Blind Sand] !”

“MY EYES!” The soldiers clutched at their eyes and collapsed, Kohaku then released another shockwave and blasted them away.

The moment she landed, she began to run. I matched her pace by swinging my spear at the enemies.

“ [Come forth, Wind! Helix Spear: [Spiral Lance] !” I blasted a spear of wind ahead of us, and it mingled with the storm to blow through the entire Hashiba army in a line.

“I-It’s an Oni! There’s an Oni here to kill us!”

“Run away! It’s here to take our souls!”

Don’t jump to conclusions... They look dead, but I’ve taken great pains to paralyze them all or knock them out.

Suddenly, I heard a roaring of voices from the castle gate.

“The Tokugawa army is advancing! Hold fast!”

“It’s no use! The right flank is crumbling! We can’t intercept!”

Aha... Did Yae tell her dad already? The once-unified Hashiba army was rapidly becoming a disorganized mob. Demoralized, too. I could hear it in their voices.

“Retreat! Fall back! Fall back, damn it!”

“Run away!” The commanders could barely be heard over the clip-clop of their horse’s hooves. The foot soldiers ran after them in fear. Only the paralyzed soldiers on the ground remained of Hashiba’s army.

I heard cheers of victory from the Tokugawa-Date army. They had decided not to chase the fleeing soldiers.

“Seems like we’ve fought them off for now, huh?”

“So it would seem, my liege.” I jumped down from Kohaku’s back and slipped the spear into **[Storage]** . Then, I noticed Yae and her father rushing toward me from the castle gates.

“Tou—”

“Shhh!” Yae was about to carelessly yell my name, so I told her to quiet down. The two came closer, and I spoke to them in a hushed tone.

“It’s been a while, Jutaro.”

“Touya-dono, thank you for your aid. We are truly in your debt.” Yae’s older brother bowed down to me. He was stiff as ever.

“But what is this you’re wearing...?”

“It’d be a problem if Brunhild was involved with this officially. That’s why I’m not Touya. I’m the mysterious Oni.”

“Ah... Very well. But what should we call you?”

“Uhh... Call me Shirogane.” It was a simple name, but maybe not quite fitting, given the silver-platinum connotations. Everything except my mask was black, after all.

“More importantly than that, how is Ieyahsu? I heard he was hurt.”

“Ah, yes. He had been struck by an arrow to the shoulder, but he is quite fine.”

“Can you take me to him? I’ll heal him up.” Most people from Eashen, Yae included, didn’t have much aptitude for magic. There were barely any people in the country who could muster the power of light or dark, especially.

They did have their own specialized techniques that made use of magic power in a sense, though. Ninjutsu, for example. Tsubaki throwing her voice into nearby animals was an application of this.

“We’d appreciate that greatly. He’s with father in the castle right now. Let us depart at once, Tou— Shirogane-dono.” Yae hopped up on to Kohaku and we all headed toward the castle gates. The Tokugawa soldiers stared at us in a mixture of shock and awe.

“Forgive me, truly... It seems I owe you yet another debt, Tou— Shirogane-dono...” I cured Ieyahsu with my magic, and then helped the other wounded soldiers too.

He thanked me, and we sat together inside a hall in the castle. The main Tokugawa vassals were also present. Yae’s father, Jubei, was there among them.

“You know, stories of you have even reached Eashen... Your great and extravagant deeds, as well.” His eyes were filled with a curious sort of light as he stared at me. He was generally full of wonder. He seemed somewhat similar to the King of Belfast, and Mismede’s beastking in that regard...

“What kind of stories...?”

“We’ve heard that you violently seized the princesses of many great nations, that you annihilated an army of demonic monsters all on your own, and that you have some control over great metallic giants... And that you used that power to annihilate a country!” I smiled awkwardly as he spoke. Those stories were... partly true, at best. It was a game of telephone... The stories probably started true, but gradually warped from teller to teller.

I decided to brush that aside for the time being.

“My lord. Who is this...?” His retainers began to murmur amongst themselves. It was only natural to be suspicious around an incredibly powerful man who appeared from nowhere and refused to show his

face.

“Ah, well. This is Shirogane-dono. He is a guest of Jubei’s and the Kokonoe family. As you can see, his strength is simply unmatched. A single Oni with the power of a thousand men. He learned of our desperate plight and came to our aid, he did.” After Ieyahsu spoke, everyone looked over to Jubei. He nodded. His affirmation seemed to reassure them, at least a little bit. Yae sat firmly next to him, too. Kohaku had reverted to her miniature form, and was comfortably nestled into Yae’s lap.

“That reminds me, Ieyahsu. How is the war front?”

“Right now we are greatly outmatched. Hashiba far exceeds us in terms of numbers. In order to succeed, we must take advantage of our enemy’s weak loyalty.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, I said it was Hashiba’s army... However, the soldiers were mostly from Oda, Mori, Shimazu, and Chosokabe to begin with. The majority do not follow him out of loyalty or respect. They simply fear Hideyooshi’s power.”

And here I thought control through fear was Oda Nobunaga’s patented method... Still, the Hideyoshi I remember from Earth’s history was definitely capable of cruelty. If I remember right, after his son was born, he made his own nephew, Hidetsugu, commit suicide. Plus, he had Hidetsugu’s wife, concubines, and children killed as well... didn’t he?

Still, cruelty wasn’t all that unusual for the warring states period. Even Tokugawa Ieyasu historically punished one of his traitorous vassals, Oga Yashiro, by sawing him to death with a bamboo saw. The guy did try to sell him out to Takeda, though.

That Ieyasu didn’t seem much like the Ieyahsu in front of me... And the Hideyoshi... or rather, Hideyooshi of this world seemed different too.

“So why is everyone obeying him? Is he really that strong?”

“Nay. He carries with him a golden gourd that commands a powerful jutsu. With it, so they say, he can make anyone obey his power. The rumors state that Nobunaga’s assassin, Mitsuhide, was willed by the gourd to kill him.”

A golden gourd, huh...? Maybe this is another artifact. Could we have another situation like that immortality jewel again? It better not have fallen outta the Storehouse! I worriedly took out my smartphone and began scrolling through a list of items confirmed to be missing from the Storehouse. But nope. No gourd. It might’ve still been an artifact, though. Just maybe one made by another researcher, like during the Dragon King incident.

“So if I took out that gourd, do you think the enemy would crumble?”

“Possibly, yes. But Hideyooshi never leaves his castle. Even I’ve never seen his face, despite being a feudal lord just like him. The rumors say he doesn’t like being seen due to the fact that he resembles a monkey.”

...Some kind of monkey-faced feudal lord? I wonder how he’d look without hair... Heh.

Still, having a lord who’s also a shut-in is unusual. Hell, the fact that he was granted the title is suspicious enough.

A monkey-faced man who found a golden gourd and infiltrated Oda... He must have manipulated the Emperor and used that influence to become a feudal lord, too. The Emperor isn’t exactly anything special in Eashen, either. Most people just do their own thing, so it’s no surprise that he’d be able to muster up the ability to manipulate so easily.

After that he crushed Oda and took over, I guess. I didn’t really have a good idea of what that guy’s plan was or how it all connected.

“So... where exactly is Hideyooshi?”

“Oosaka. He built a golden castle there.”

Is it really made out of gold? I guess that fits with the kind of guy he is... But it’s still a little much.

I projected my smartphone map into the air and gave it a look-over. The retainers in the room exclaimed in shock, but I paid them no mind.

Tsk... They put up magic barriers all over the place... That means I can’t just use [Gate], then. I decided that Gungnir would be the best option, in that case.

“Tou— Shirogane-dono. Just what are you planning?”

“I’m going to attack Hideyooshi head-on... Hmm... I wonder if crashing into his castle with Gungnir would be too messy. It’ll probably blow the place to pieces. But I can’t really think of another way to get inside.” Ieyahsu simply muttered in astonishment at me as I planned my course of attack.

“...Are you capable of something like that?”

“I can do it, yeah. I have a lot of strange powers, after all. As far as finding him goes, I’ll just look around after I breach the castle. Then, I just need to take care of that gourd...”

“Could I come along, then?” A sudden voice rang out from the hallway. Everyone turned toward the source.

Standing there was a boy about my age. A tall man stood next to him. He wore black armor over a black hakama, and a purple overcoat. Still, what stood out to me was not his gaudy clothing, but the patch over his right eye.

I had a sudden thought as to just who this one-eyed warrior could be...

“Are you the one they call Shirogane-dono? That battle earlier

was incredible, truly incredible... I apologize for being late. Allow me to introduce myself. I am the feudal lord who presides over the Date house. Date Jiro Massamune."

I knew it!

"Date... Massamune...? Then this fellow must be..."

"My retainer, Katakura Kohjuro Kagetsunna."

"A pleasure." The tall, slit-eyed man bowed his head. That's about what I expected. If Date Masamune was around, then he had to be with Katakura Kagetsuna. The two were an inseparable combo.

But there were more pressing matters on my mind.

"By come along... You mean come to Oosaka with me?"

"I do, yes. I'm interested in meeting Hideyooshi before he dies, and I'm very interested in that gourd of his." Masamune smiled a little too broadly. It was a little teasing, in all honesty. I had no doubt in my mind that this youngster was plotting something.

Ieyahsu caught on as well, as he let out a sigh and commented.

"Massamune-dono... If your intention is to seize the golden gourd for yourself, then I'd ask you forget such a foolish idea."

"What?! How did you know what I was thinking?!"

"Massamune-sama... Your thoughts were right there on your charming face." Kohjuro spoke up and gave a veiled warning about displaying intent. Massamune had certainly let things slip a little too soon.

"I'll just make it clear now. I'm going to destroy that gourd. It sounds like a really bad artifact to me."

"Hmph... Very well, then. As you wish, Shirogane-dono. I will stand by your choice." Massamune said that, but he started grinning again.

You're fooling nobody!

"...You are thinking of swiping it from him before he can destroy it, aren't you?"

"What?! How did you know what I was thinking?!"

"Massamune-sama... As I said before... your thoughts were right there on your charming face." Both master and subordinate were repeating their previous exchange. They didn't necessarily seem like bad people, though. The Date Masamune of my old world employed cunning strategies all the time, too. Though I didn't recall him being exposed all that often.

"Ieyahsu, is it okay to take the feudal lord of Date right into enemy territory?"

"Well, I say that him wanting to go with you is no problem of mine. It is a matter for his house to determine." Ieyahsu clearly had no plans of interfering, even if they were allies. But I couldn't help but worry that if Date died their alliance might end up dissolved.

“Actually... I too would like to come to Oosaka’s castle. I’m not so lazy that I would have my guests do all the fighting for me.”

Hmph... I guess doing it all alone isn’t fair.

“Then... can you and your men operate outside of Oosaka castle to draw their soldiers away? While you do that, I can take care of the gourd, and then leave the rest to you guys. How about that?”

“That sounds quite fine to me, but Oosaka is a rather far distance away... Ah, but... Tou— Shirogane-dono, I have heard you employ transportation magic.” Leaving the castle unguarded would be bad, so we settled on taking thirty-thousand soldiers from the combined Tokugawa-Date alliance with us. It was going to be a raid, so that number seemed more than suitable.

“If we deal with Hideyooshi, will the civil war die down?”

“Well, the situation really exploded once Hashiba took on the problems that Oda began... If we defeat Hashiba, then the fighting should end as well... I hope.”

“But the Emperor isn’t capable of supporting our country. To whom will the beacon of control be passed?” Massamune folded his arms as he muttered.

What’s with that wicked face? You’re making it way too obvious! You won’t be able to get one over an old raccoon dog like Ieyahsu if you make yourself so easy to read...

Hashiba had destroyed Oda, so if I destroyed them... Tokugawa would be the strongest Feudal Lord left.

Huh... Wait. Does that make this the this-world equivalent of my world’s Battle of Sekigahara? Or is this the Siege of Osaka’s summer campaign? But wait... It’s winter... And Hideyoshi was dead when that happened. It is gonna be spring soon, though...

I decided it was pointless to compare. It’d be a real pain if Hideyooshi united the nation and invaded Yulong, so that needed to end as soon as possible. Without any further hesitation, I hopped into Gungnir and made for Oosaka.



“Is that Oosaka castle...?”

Whoa, that’s bright... It’s all sparkly and golden! The walls, support beams, and roof tiles were all shining gold. It looked more like Kinkaku-ji temple, to me. It was also shaped differently to the Osaka castle I knew. I couldn’t even imagine how much it would’ve cost.

Yae, Kohaku, and I walked along the castle grounds, watching as the sunlight shimmered off of the grand construct.

Hideyooshi is in there, I guess. He didn’t show up on my map, but that’s hardly surprising. Guess I’ve got no choice but to go in there.

For now, I’ll bring the army over...

I cast my spell, and the Tokugawa-Date alliance soldiers appeared from all four directions, surrounding the castle entirely.

A war trumpet blared all of a sudden, and then a beat of war drums followed. The army charged onward and readied their bows.

The Oosaka garrison didn't seem to have anything special in place to prepare for the raid.

"Alright, time to bust in."

"Ah, well... Oosaka castle has a magical barrier, does it not? Teleporting within should not be possible, it should not... How do you intend to... Wait, could you be planning to...?"

"We'll be flying in, of course." Yae made a frowny face at that. I forgot how much she disliked flying. Rosetta was in the sky piloting Gungnir, but I decided it'd be easier to just use my flight magic to invade directly.

"If you want to wait out here, by all means..."

"N-No, I shall join you, I shall. We are betrothed, and thus we should share the same fate, we should." My future wife quietly motivated herself, both hands on her chest. It was happy to hear her speak like that, but she didn't have to talk like we were about to charge into our deaths.

"Alright, then. You wanna ride Kohaku, Yae?"

"Oh, is this how it works, is it?" I waited until Yae clambered up onto Kohaku's back, and then I cast **[Levitation]** on them both.

Following that, I cast **[Fly]** on myself and floated the two of them next to me toward the castle. Naturally, I'd also cast **[Invisible]** on us both. I didn't want to be struck by arrows, after all.

We entered the castle and found ourselves in a broad room with laminate wood flooring. *What the hell... It's even gold on the inside...?* I looked around the room, and not a single thing was drab. Everything sparkled.

"This is rather distasteful, it is..."

"Yeah, it's pretty damn tacky..." *I know they say people who enjoy gold are those with lofty ideals, but this is a little much.*

Hideyooshi didn't seem to be in the area, so we headed down some nearby stairs.

There was nobody down the stairs, either. However, as we walked down a long hallway, I felt an unusual presence. It was hard to place, but it was definitely something weird. Yae and Kohaku didn't seem to notice it at all.

I slowly moved toward this unknown presence. We passed through various sliding doors of gold, until we finally made it...

"Huh?"

"What is wrong, Touya-dono?" I stopped before a sliding door and opened it just a little bit to peek through to the other side. The

moment I looked through, I snapped it shut immediately. *Seriously?! I* thought my eyes were playing tricks on me, so I opened up the door again...

There was someone sitting on a pillow in the middle of large room. He wore vibrant silk clothing of purple and red. He also wore a golden hakama. He was scratching his back in a most uncouth manner. And, on his back... there was a golden gourd. It was about the size of a two-liter soda bottle.

No way... That's Hideyooshi?! Yae peeked in as well, and she was just as dumbfounded. She quietly muttered.

“...That is a monkey, that is.”

“...So my eyes weren't playing tricks.” I was a little relieved that Yae was seeing the same thing I was, since it meant that my eyes were alright and I was completely sane.

But there was absolutely a monkey here. A monkey relaxing in this room. And he wasn't a man with a monkey-like face. It was literally a finely-dressed monkey.

He was slightly smaller than Yae. He vaguely resembled a Japanese macaque, but he was the size of an orangutan. I'd never seen a Japanese macaque that size, though. I wondered if he was a magical beast or something.

“What the hell...? Is this one of Hideyooshi's pets?”

“Ook. Is someone there?” *He spoke. The friggin' monkey spoke!* I noticed he had a paper fan in his hand. He slapped it against his palm as he looked us over.

We'd been discovered, so there was no point in hiding. I opened up the sliding door and stepped into the light.

“Hoo hoo. An Oni, a lady, and a white tiger... Strange guests, strange guests indeed. Are you friends of those outside? Ook.”



“...Are you... Are you Hideyooshi?”

“Hooohoo! That I am. The one and only Hashiba Chikuzen no Kami Hideyooshi!” I could hear his voice, but I could also vaguely hear monkey noises underneath his words.

What the hell? It feels weird hearing him talk. It's like I'm watching a really bad movie dub.

“You have done well reaching this place. Congratulations. Ook. As a reward, you may become my personal attendants.”

“Thanks, but no. I'm nobody's attendant.”

“Hoo! I did not say you'd have a choice!” Hideyooshi's eyes suddenly shone a gleaming red. That was when I noticed the *something* coming out of the gourd on his back.

Yae and Kohaku suddenly stiffened up. Their eyes were unfocused and cloudy. It almost seemed like they'd been put under some kind of trance.

“...Bastard. What'd you do? No, more importantly than that, what is—”

“Ook ook?! Why are you able to resist it?!” The monkey stood up, evidently angry at me. His eyes glimmered again, and that *something* leaked out of the gourd once more. It was exactly what I'd suspected...

“Why?! Why isn't it working?!”

“I knew it. You're not just a monkey, are you? You're just using a monkey's body! And that gourd... It's your real body, right? Reveal yourself, servile god.”

“You miserable little... Just who are youuu?!” The monkey's eyes became blood-red all over. The *something* that kept leaking from the gourd? It was divinity. Godly essence. The energy carried by anyone from the realm of the gods. However, unlike the essence that my sisters and God Almighty held, this one was murkier.

Servile gods were at the bottom rung of the ladder, as far as I knew. But regardless of status, a god was a god. Manipulating humans would be trivial.

I was able to resist it because of the divinity inherent inside me. Kohaku probably couldn't because she was only here based on my magic.

I sent a message to Luli, over in Brunhild Castle.

《Luli, do you copy?》

《I do, my lord. How may I serve?》

《I need you to find Karen or Moroha, immediately. Tell them I've found the servile god. They'll know what that means. Thanks.》

《As you command.》 My sisters told me they'd know whenever any gods used their powers, but it looked like this guy had been using just little enough to avoid detection. It seemed that the power flashed

for just an instant, and that was all that it took.

I was under the impression that my divinity was leaking out too, so I was surprised this guy hadn't noticed. But then I thought perhaps I had some kind of subconscious control over it, so maybe it was more of a trickle. *Wait, then what if I tried to focus...*

I closed my eyes, focusing on the deep black of my vision.

Hm... This feeling... It's kind of like magic, but... brighter? It's hard to describe... Kind of like a whole different type of pressure in the air... Gh... Let's see if I can... bring it out...

It took only a moment. A dazzling flash of light. My body lit up like a Christmas tree as I was engulfed in a shining vortex. The light reflected off the golden room, causing a dazzling shimmer everywhere.

"Wuh..." The vortex gradually calmed, but I could still feel light flowing across my skin. I looked down at my hands in surprise, and felt something tangible resting on my shoulders.

Huh? My... Hair? I put my hands on my head and traced it... all the way down to my waist. *What the hell...? I have golden hair? Or uh... platinum blond? I don't know how to verbalize this!*

"Ook-eek! Th-That power! A-Are you from the realm of the gods?!" The monkey fearfully took a step backward. The gourd then fell down from his back and rolled along the ground. Gradually, it began to spit out a golden color, until the entire thing took the shape of a man.

A thin old man lay on the ground. He had a scraggly beard, and glared at me with eyes full of hatred.

As I stood there, with long golden hair and divine light emanating from every pore on my body... it was hard for me to suppress the urge to yell "This isn't even my final form!" I was also half-tempted to try a Kamehameha. But I was fairly composed, all things considered. I was surprised by how well I was handling this sudden transformation.

Something similar happened to the old man in front of me, as well. A divine aura emanated from his body and wrapped him in light. Though the light was somehow muddier than mine. Kind of like a dark gold, almost. All of a sudden, he made his move.

"Hyaaaah!" The scraggly old man, who somewhat resembled a praying mantis in his motions, fired a beam of divine light straight out of his palm. I immediately responded by catching it with my own hand. The resulting shockwave sent a great rumble through the castle. The floorboards, walls, and ceiling tiles began to crumble and shudder. Myself and the old man were at the center of the blast.

Kohaku and Yae were in danger of being knocked down, so I used my magic to suspend them in the air.

"Ook, eek, hooooooh?!" As the very floor beneath us disappeared,

the gold-clad monkey went tumbling down with the rest of the wreckage. *Monkeys can survive falling from trees, right...? W-Well, this is a castle, anyway.*

The old man and I floated in the air and glared at one another.

Wait, how am I flying without using either [Fly] or [Levitation]...? Is this a side-effect of my own divinity? As I thought about how weird that was, the old mantis guy opened his mouth.

“You wretch... What are you? A lesser god? A servile god? Come to capture me on some fool’s errand?”

“I’m neither, and I’m here on no such job. Why don’t you just come in quietly? Don’t you think it’s selfish to come down to the mortal world like this? Don’t you think it’s wrong to cause chaos from the shadows of Eashen like this?!”

“Silence! Can you even begin to fathom the boredom I felt day after day? Do you understand the emptiness inside me?! The dull, monotonous grind of that world?!”

Huh... So do servile gods not have positions or something? Karen’s the God of Love, and Moroha’s the God of Swords, but... Is this guy unemployed or something?! He’s a NEET!

“I haven’t even gotten a chance to live my life yet! I’m gonna do great, you hear me?! I’ll become a wonderful god, and plenty of people will worship me...!”

Sure sounds like a NEET. Can’t a guy like this become the God of the Slackers or something?

So this guy had gotten bored of being unrecognized in the realm of the gods, and came down here to make this world his playground...

So he wants to be a god with duties that badly, huh...? What a pain in the ass.

“Didn’t you violate the rules of the divine realm? You should surrender already. Just come in peacefully.”

“Hmph... I sense it, boy. Your divinity is still unbalanced. Are you perhaps new to this? I feel as though you’re something fresh... Something new. Do you really believe you can handle me like that?”

“No, like I said, that’s not my job...” Just as I began to speak, the scenery around the two of us began to twist and warp.

In a matter of moments, everything was a strange off-white. The world around me was a pure void, with strange beads of light floating here and there. There was no ground beneath us, nor sky above us. We simply floated in an endless, milky abyss.

“What the...”

“This is the Spirit Realm, you know? We can freely use our divine powers here without interfering in the mortal world, you know?” Karen suddenly appeared beside me without warning. She must have brought us here. *Wait, what about Yae and Kohaku?!*

“Don’t you worry yourself about those two, man. I disabled that hypnosis on them and sent them to safety.” Moroha appeared as well, equally sudden and equally without explanation. The servile god saw them and immediately went pale. Shock covered his face.

“The God of Love... and the God of Swords?! What are you doing here?!”

“Come on, man... You’ve been doing whatever you wanted down here, you think we wouldn’t notice? You’ve been hiding pretty good so far, but we’ve got your number now!” Moroha pulled a blade from the scabbard on her waist. It was just a standard steel blade. But that didn’t matter, because the important thing was who was wielding it. Even a wooden sword could rend mountains if it was in her hands.

“You broke the rules, you know? Even if you’re unemployed, you can’t use divine powers in the lower worlds...”

“Gh... Unemployed... Unemployed! *Unemployed?! Everyone says that! Stop it, it’s not fair...!*” The servile god clenched his teeth and growled. From the sounds of things, my sisters weren’t allowed to use powers related to anything other than their respective fields, and even that was limited. It kind of felt like I was in a particular weird situation in regards to those rules, though.

I wasn’t a god, yet I wielded the power of one. I wasn’t a god, so I wasn’t bound by the rules of their world. That was probably how it was, at least.

I figured if God Almighty decided that I was appropriate enough to become the god of *something*, then I’d be accepted as one of them in their world... But I didn’t really feel like becoming a god or anything.

“Now, are you going to come easily? Though, given the severity of your crimes, we can’t give you a softer sentence.”

“Yup. You’re going to be reincarnated as a lesser creature for a whole hundred-million years, you know?”

“Wh— Like hell I am!” The servile god shot out another concentrated beam of his own divinity. Moroha was faster, though. In a single strike, she sliced off the man’s raised arm at the elbow.

“Gwugh...!” I was expecting to see blood, but... nothing came out of the wound. His arm just floated off.

A god was a god, after all. Seemed like he was completely different from flesh-and-blood creatures like me. That made me wonder why he took the form of an old man... Did it reflect his feelings, or was it just the look he wanted to go for? I wondered if he was more focused on a particular aesthetic than actually doing anything useful.

“If you continue making this more annoying than it has to be, your head is next. Once you’ve paid for your crimes, you may come back as one of us... But that won’t be an option if I end your existence

right now.”

Huh, guess gods can be killed, then. Even if they can live forever. They say curiosity killed the cat, but maybe boredom kills a god... Seemed like all gods probably died eventually. Maybe.

“If you’re going to force me into such disgrace, then at least allow me to struggle here! Haaah!”

“Not gonna happen!” As soon as the murky light began to emanate from the servile god, Moroha split him clean in two down the middle.

Oof... I know there’s no blood but that’s, uh... pretty intense...

“Gahh... Y-You won’t be so lucky next time...”

“Next time...?”

“M-Moroha! H-His arm!” The servile god let out a wicked laugh, and Karen yelled out something about his arm.

That was when I noticed his severed arm, seconds before it vanished from the space we were floating in. Shortly afterward, the rest of his body began to dissolve into grains of sand.

“Damn it to hell... He was smarter than I thought.”

“This isn’t good, you know? His divinity’s all gone.”

“Huh? What just happened?” I was a little confused, so I needed some clarification.

“He channeled most of his divine essence into his right arm and escaped to the mortal world. Plus, his divinity’s gone off our radar again, so we lost him.”

“We’re back where we started... Which means we’ll have to stick around, you know?” *Seriously...? How’d he get away when we had him cornered? That’s hardly fair.*

His divinity was masked again, and I couldn’t use **[Search]** to find him, since I had no idea what form he’d be taking.

He kind of reminded me of a lizard. Chop off the tail, but it can still grow it back...

“Anyway, Touya...? What’s with that costume? You look kind of strange, you know?” Karen folded her arms as she looked me up and down. I was still wearing the Oni mask, so I probably looked weird.

“I disguised myself because I didn’t want Brunhild to be affiliated with the Eashen civil war. But uh... more importantly than that, what’s with my hair? Why’d it grow out and change color?!”

“Hmph... You awakened to your own godhood, dumbass. You probably didn’t notice, but your eyes are golden too. This is your true form.”

What?! I took out a mirror from [Storage]. Moroha was right, my eyes were a glimmering gold.

“...Is it gonna change back?”

“If you suppress your own divinity you should change back, you

know? The fact you awakened means you should be able to control it.”

“...Don’t suppress it while we’re here in the Spirit Realm, though. Right now the area is clear since we’re exerting our divinity, but if any Spirits or Wraiths smell a human in here, they’ll come here. And it won’t be pretty.”

Huh, alright... I’ll save it for later, then.

My smartphone suddenly started to vibrate. The shock of the sensation made me jolt. I looked at the screen, and it informed me that God himself was calling.

“Hello?”

“Hey, Touya? Sounds like your divinity has awakened...”

“Yup. There aren’t gonna be any weird side effects, are there?”

“Hmm? You have not exactly turned into a god, so you should be fine... But it was I who brought you into the Realm of the Gods, and it was I who forged your body... It is likely that your essence has the same divine spark as mine.”

Huh... There are different types? Oh, right... That other guy’s did seem murkier.

I tried to focus on Karen, and I suddenly noticed her golden light had faint traces of pink inside it. Moroha’s also had a light blue. I guessed that this divine spark was probably related to the color you emanated.

“Hmhm... I wonder what I should do about that. If you have the same divine spark as I, then you will likely become my ward entirely... Well, that is fine. I have no problems with you as my ward, Touya.”

“What do you mean?”

“You have the power of a god, but you are still human, Touya. I must define your position clearly with the other gods... But I cannot appoint you as a god of anything in particular, nor are you in a position to be made into a servile god... That is why you will be my ward, and under my direct protection.”

“That means we’ll be family, you know?” Karen smiled and winked at me. I was mostly confused.

Family, huh...? Wait! Don’t eavesdrop on my phone call!

Still... Being family with God Almighty...? The God of Worlds? Sounds kinda nice.

“Do not think about it too deeply. You have two elder sisters, after all... Just consider me your new grandfather.” *Ha. That’s a pretty high bar to pass, you know? But alright...*

“But uh... Do you know where that runaway god went?”

“I do not, I am afraid to say. His presence has become as undetectable as dust. And finding him is not my job, young man. I am the one who should be informed by those hunting him, no?” I was a

little confused by what he meant. Moroha suddenly leaned in to clarify.

“So long as that guy’s running around, we have reason to be down here, remember? I’m down here helping Karen find him, after all.”

Huh... I see... Wait!

I suddenly glared at Moroha, suspicion burning in my gaze. She failed her arms and yelled in a panic.

“No, no! Don’t get the wrong idea! We didn’t let the guy loose intentionally or anything! We’d never mix business with pleasure, promise!”

Hmph... I guess I believe you... But I wonder if any other gods have been trying to come down, and if I’ll see any others coming down thanks to this convenient excuse...

“At any rate, young Touya... That is the situation as it is now. I shall talk to you again soon, take care.” God Almighty hung up on me before I could talk.

Hmm... What can I do in this new God Mode anyway? After a little bit of experimenting, I discovered that I could cast spells without speaking out their names or chants. It was a little frightening wielding that kind of power.

I left the Spirit Realm behind, muttering quietly and pondering my new powers.



We returned to the mortal realm and found Oosaka castle ablaze. The battle had been decided, it seemed. We heard victory cries here and there. The Tokugawa-Date alliance was successful.

The sudden raid was simply too much for the unprepared Hashiba army.

Before I went to Ieyahsu’s camp, I disabled my own divinity. My hair changed back to its usual dark luster, but it didn’t get any shorter... *Is this gonna happen every time I activate it? I hope I don’t have a finite amount of hair in there...*

I muttered anxiously as I made my way back to Ieyahsu’s camp to meet Yae and Kohaku.

“What happened to your hair, Touya-dono?!”

“A lot happened, Yae. But Hideyooshi is done for.” Ieyahsu, who was eavesdropping, suddenly cheered in joy. The defeat of Hideyooshi solidified the victory that had been earned this day, after all.

The Hashiba army would collapse, and Tokugawa would now hold most of the power in Eashen. It was similar to my world’s history, yet completely different as well.

I healed the wounded with my magic, and then decided to make for home. Everything from that point on was Eashen’s issue to handle,

after all. Everyone under Hideyooshi's control would likely recover their senses soon, too.

As a last word of advice, I told Ieyahsu to watch out for a man named Ishida Mitsunari, just in case. But he didn't seem to know who that was, so it seemed like that guy didn't exist in this world.

Oh well, I guess not everything's the same.

Yae, Kohaku, myself, and my sisters, all boarded Gungnir. Then, Rosetta flew us off to Brunhild.

I was extremely tired, so I quickly reported in and headed straight for bed. A lot of people asked me why my hair was so long, though.

A day later, my situation was dire. I collapsed into a deep fever, and I had no physical strength. I wasn't hungry, and I felt lethargic. Not even **[Recovery]** or **[Refresh]** had any kind of effect on me.

"Wow... This is symptomatic of the common cold, but it's also quite different. You have a fever, but your body hasn't increased in temperature." Flora, clad in a nurse outfit, looked at the thermometer with a frown. I was bedridden, of course, wrapped up in blankets and looking up at her groggily.

"Wh-What kind of sickness is this?! Wh-What should we do?!"

Yumina sat beside the bed in a panic.

Heh... It's kinda cute seeing her get like this.

My eight fiancées were all in the room and standing or sitting by the bed. Yumina, Elze, Linze, Yae, Lu, Sue, Hilde, and Leen were all there attending to me. But also... Kousaka, Laim, Lain, Lapis, Renne, Cesca, Flora, Karen, Kohaku, Luli, Kougyoku, Kokuyou, Sango, and Paula were all packed in there too. It was way too many people for my liking.

I was happy they'd gathered there out of concern for me, but it was still a little excessive.

"Alright, now... Touya is quite fine, you know? Everyone go back to work. There's no problem here, no problem at all. It's just fatigue from yesterday. You should just leave it all to me, you know?" Karen smacked her hands together and ushered everyone out of the room. She was telling everyone that crowding around wouldn't do me any good, but I couldn't hear all that much. My body was so heavy that I couldn't even get up.

The door slammed shut until only Karen remained. She sat down on the nearby chair and looked down at me with a frown.

"You with me, Touya? This sickness is just your body suffering the effects of your divine power, you know? You'll recover if you rest for a day, and you'll slowly get used to the power inside you, I promise. So sleep for now, okay?"

Oh, I see... It's because of my divinity, then... Thought so... I was just relieved to know the actual cause. Plus, it wasn't like I was suffering

any physical pain... It was more that I simply couldn't exert any physical force at all. My head also felt fuzzy, like I was dreaming.

Still, Karen told me to sleep, so that was what I planned on doing. I quietly drifted off into the land of sleep. Anxieties be damned.

"Mmh..." When I woke up, my body still felt heavy. I opened my eyes, my gaze fixed on the ceiling. It was a sight I was gradually growing used to.

"Ah... You're awake?" Linze was reading a book by my bedside, but she paused to look at me. I wondered how long she'd been sitting there for. I pretended not to notice the... Rosy nature of the book she was reading.

She poured me a glass of water from the jug on the bedside table and handed it over to me, then dabbed my forehead with a wet towel.



I raised my body a bit, took the glass and drank from it, and then promptly slumped back beneath the covers.

Ahh...

“Your fever seems to have subsided, but... Well, are you feeling any better?”

“Ah... I-I’m fine... I’ll get better in my sleep, you know?”

“Still, I’m just glad to know there are times when you actually stay in bed, Touya. It’s a little relieving, hehe...”

Geez, what am I, a monster...? I guess I should explain myself soon, though... It definitely looks odd from the outside.

“It’s a little funny, is all... When I met you in that back-alley in Reflet, I stayed with you and watched you grow as a person. Now you’re a grand duke of your own nation... You felt like a person beyond me sometimes, Touya... A-And a little distant. So please forgive me, but... when I see you in a vulnerable state like this, it makes me happy to know that... you’re not always far away.”

“...Hey now, nothing’s changed. I’m always with you, Linze. And the others too. I want you to be by my side forever, as well. You guys are the reason I got this far, after all... Mh... I promise... I... I’ll make you happy, so... Ngh...”

Zzz... I was suddenly hit by fatigue again. As I drifted back to sleep, I felt the sensation of lips pressed against my cheek. The little smooch guided me back to dreamland.

The next morning I opened up my eyes, and my body was light as a feather. I felt completely refreshed. I’d slept a full day, and I was healed!

I wanted Lu to cut my hair right away, but I decided to hold off for a bit. If it was just gonna grow out again if I tapped into my divinity, then there was no point in rushing to get it lopped off.

“Oi! Are you alright, bruv...?” Renne saw me come out of my room. She was carrying a basket of laundry down the hall. I was really proud of how diligent she was becoming.

“Yeah, I’m good. Thanks for your concern, Renne.” I gave her a little pat on the head and turned to leave. I must have had a lot of people worrying about me.

I wanted to learn more about the divinity within me. Karen was sleeping, though... So I had no choice but to go to Moroha. I figured she’d be over at the training grounds.

Naturally, I was correct. She’d been training hard all morning. I took her aside to a quiet place in order to get some answers.

“Ah, well... It’s a little complicated... You can ask about divinity, but uh... Well, you see, each god has their own particular brand of it.” Moroha looked a little defeated, like she couldn’t give me the answers

I sought.

“So what about you, then? How do you use yours?”

“Me? It works well as a combat tool for me. I strike enemies with it, and guard myself. But the best way I employ my divinity is creating weapons from it.” Moroha took a dagger out from a scabbard and, in a matter of moments, shrouded the blade in divine light. The dagger quickly became a shining knife. The light extended beyond the physical blade of the weapon, creating a longer weapon.

Whoa, it's a beam sword!

“To be blunt, there's uh... no real rule about how to use your divinity. It's the power of a god, after all. It just comes naturally to you. You'll get used to it, but I wouldn't recommend relying on it often.”

“Why's that?”

“Well, first of all, it's a power that isn't used in mortal realms. It's clearly not magic, so you'll be at risk of exposing your identity. Secondly, it's a major strain on your body. You'll slowly get used to it, and the after-effects will lessen eventually, but you shouldn't keep on using it. Thirdly, there's no reason for you to completely embrace your divine side so soon, right? Each time you use it, you'll inch closer to godhood.” Moroha raised some fair points. It reminded me of what Linze said, too. About me being distant. The power of a god wasn't necessary in my life.

Even so, I wouldn't want to have that power unavailable to me if I truly needed it. That was why I wanted to acclimatize my body to the new situation.

I let magic power and divinity flow through my body, and triggered the divine spark inside me.

My body erupted into brilliant light once more, and my hair turned golden as well. It grew again, too... Right down to my damn knees. I grumbled quietly as I shifted my messy hair around to my back.

“Can't I manage the hair at least, though?”

“Hmph... I wouldn't risk it. There's a chance you could have your hair fall out each time you triggered your divine spark.”

“I'll be alright, then...” I had no intentions of joining a monastery. I decided I'd just have Lu cut my hair afterward.

“Oh right, another thing... You're triggering the power of **Divine Providence** every time you shift into that form. Small animals, or people who aren't particularly strong, will likely pass out in your presence...”

“Sounds like a pain...” I took the dagger and tried to gather divinity in my palm like she did.

Ghh... This is way tougher than pouring magic into stuff...

Eventually, I manage to create a divine blade just as Moroha had. Compared to Moroha, who had done it in a matter of seconds, it had taken me way too long.

Seemed like handling divinity was a matter of hard work and repeated practice.

“As you grow accustomed to your own divine spark, you’ll be able to master it.”

“Oh, that reminds me. I can use magic without chanting in this form. Do you know what that’s all about?”

“Beats me. Gods like me don’t use magic, remember?”

Oh, right... Crap. Guess I have no frame of reference here, then. I’ll just have to figure it out for myself.

I pointed up in the air and mentally conjured a **[Fire Arrow]**, except instead of a basic flaming missile attack, a monstrous torrent of flame burst from my fingertips.

Holy hell. Would anyone even survive that?! Oh... Oh, whoa... Weird... My divinity just... went down? It’s not recovering half as quickly as my magic does... Is this because I’m untrained? It feels weird being this weak... Ugh, seems I’ve got a lot to learn.

This Apotheosis, which was what I chose to name my transformation, seemed like a hassle. I deactivated it and returned to my regular form. As I’d expected, I felt lethargic and heavy, but not nearly as much as I did the last time.

I returned to the training grounds with Moroha and waved her off. Then, I noticed Lu doing her morning training. I called her over to a nearby bench, since I was certainly due a haircut.

I summoned some scissors from **[Storage]** and handed them to her.

“W-Wasn’t it shorter than this yesterday?!”

“Ahaha... Yeah... Sure is mysterious, huh...?” Lu began to carefully cut away at my hair. Snippety snip. I didn’t really mind if she made a mistake or anything. Even if she screwed up, I could reach Apotheosis once more and grow it all back.

I don’t wanna go bald, though... If the transformation makes my hair grow out from the roots, then they might end up running out... I made a mental note to swing by the Alchemy Lab and ask Flora for infinite hair tonic.



“Something wrong, Touya?”

“Not at all. I was just worried about going bald.”

“Heheh. I wouldn’t mind. Bald or chubby, you’re still Touya to me.” Lu smiled sweetly, but I definitely didn’t want to be bald or fat... Even if baldness was unavoidable, I pledged to never become overweight...

“Oh, right! Touya... You were investigating Felsen, weren’t you? Did something happen?”

“Oh, yeah. This and that. Do you know much about them?”

“Well, I was a little worried, actually. My older sister is studying over there, remember? If something was going on in Felsen, I’d really prefer her to come home.”

Hm...? Oh, that’s right. I’d never met her, but I did recall Lu saying something about her elder sister studying over in Felsen.

Felsen was renowned as the Magic Kingdom, so I imagined that the second princess of Regulus had some kind of aptitude or interest in magic.

Still, that did make me a little uneasy... I hadn’t decided if Felsen was a bad place or not, but it was definitely the place where the stolen Frame Gear parts had been carted off to... Still, I doubted anything would happen to a princess from Regulus over there.

“Oh, wait. Does that mean Regulus and Felsen are on friendly terms?” I couldn’t imagine a royal family sending one of its daughters to an unfriendly nation, after all.

“Yeah, I think so. We’re friendly... Or it might be safer to say that Regulus and Felsen have a mutually beneficial relationship. They have magical artifacts and new techniques, while we have raw materials and valuable goods like spellstones and armor. We have a trade agreement.”

“Have you ever met their King, Lu?”

“Only once. I was invited to a formal gala in Felsen. It’s a little hard to word, but... he didn’t have the air of a mage about him at all. He kind of felt like a grizzled mercenary, a hardened man.”

A mercenary?! Can’t say I imagined that kind of image for their King...

Hm... Felsen also has a trade agreement with Lestia, right? Maybe we should use that as our way inside... If there’s no bait, you can’t catch a fish, after all.

After Lu finished up my haircut, I went back to the castle with her. Then, I opened up a [Gate] to Lestia. I knew now that I had to make my move.



Chapter IV: The Magic Kingdom, Felsen

“Sorry if this sounds unreasonable.”

“No, you needn’t worry.” The King of Lestia smiled as he waved dismissively. He was the same as ever. I was glad to have a nice guy like this as my brother-in-law. Well, I wasn’t married to Hilde quite yet, but still...

We were riding a carriage from Lestia to Felsen’s royal palace. King Reinhard had graciously arranged a meeting with Felsen’s King for me.

I didn’t want to just suddenly appear out of the blue in Felsen with **[Gate]**, so I decided that the best course of action would be to take a formal convoy with Reinhard. I did kind of cheat a little bit, though. I shortened our journey by transporting all of us just a short distance from the capital city.

I showed my findings related to the Frame Gear theft to Reinhard, but he looked it over with a frown. I asked him why he seemed so puzzled.

“Not that I doubt you, Touya... But I’m not sure I believe the King of Felsen would do such a thing.” Felsen was one of only two nations that bordered Lestia. The other was the Ryle Kingdom. Due to this proximity, they had a rich and intertwined history.

From what I understood, the nations of Lestia and Felsen used to be at war, but in recent years they had enjoyed peaceful contact and trade.

Reinhard informed me that the leader of Felsen was level-headed, open-minded, didn’t mind minor problems, and wasn’t very fussy at all. He didn’t have the personality one might expect of a mage. He was also a physical fitness fanatic and liked to lift weights.

The previous leader of Felsen was an obsessive researcher, and he even died due to a magical research accident. The current king was his younger brother, and succeeded him right away.

His name is Boulanger Frost Felsen, and even from a young age his pursuits were different to his elder brother’s. He always prioritized physical fitness and martial arts over spiritual research and magical technique. That didn’t change much after he ascended to the throne, either.

The official reason for the visit to Felsen was concerning Enlush Island. It was a place between Roadmare, Felsen, Ryle, and Lestia. Smack dab in the middle of the Rondo Sea, a small body of water that fed into the Great Gau River.

The island was technically Lestia's property, but there were many powerful magical beasts living there. Because of this, they couldn't really take advantage of the resources there. Apparently the soil wasn't very fertile there to boot. And aquatic magical beasts attacked any fishing or sailing boats that passed by. It was an island that nobody could make good use of.

I looked at this island and brought a certain proposal to the King of Lestia.

My proposal was simple. We could build bridges to connect all four nations using that island as a central nexus.

The bridges would be long, of course. However, constructing them wasn't at all impossible. If we built them, trade between the four nations would grow considerably easier. Plus, with the island as the center, it could even become a thriving commercial hub.

Each country would be able to establish their own trade rules, naturally. And exports along with imports would be strictly monitored.

I'd build the bridges to each nation, in exchange for a toll fee. On top of that, I'd also wipe out all the dangerous creatures native to the central territory.

The governments of Roadmare and Ryle both agreed to the project. Now all we needed was to see if Felsen wanted in on the plan too. If Felsen didn't agree, I'd just make a trade route between the other three nations, but I didn't exactly see any reason for them to decline.

"I hear that Felsen's on the forefront of developing magic tech, is that right?"

"That's correct, yes. They research all kinds of things including artifacts, ancient technologies, enchantments, talismans, Eashen's ninjutsu, and naturalism." Magic had seven broad elemental attributes in this world, but there were also unusual offshoots that made use of magical power as well. These were known as "arts." The ninjutsu that Tsubaki employed was an example of one such style.

They weren't determined by elemental affinities like conventional spells, so anyone with magic in them could make use of them. Still, a crazy amount of training was necessary to even begin. Even if it took five or so years to figure out the fundamentals, you wouldn't be able to use the most basic of abilities until at least another five years on top of that. So really, the path of the arts was one that took far more time and dedication than wielding magic.

Certain arts were kept secret and limited to specific families, as well, so one could never truly master every one available. The Daoshi in Yulong, for example, were masters of talisman arts.

“About sixty percent of all the enchanted items in the world were produced by Felsen’s magicians. Their success rate is nowhere near your [Enchant] spell, which always seems to work, though... so they have no means of mass production.”

“They fail that much? What’s their success rate?”

“Around every one in ten attempts work, I believe... On a good day.”

Less than ten percent...? No wonder enchanted goods are so pricey.

The Library of Babylon had some books detailing how to improve your chances at enchanting and other techniques... but I didn’t have any books on other arts that had developed since Doctor Babylon’s time. Ninjutsu, for example, had developed in Eashen, but nobody lived in that area of the world five-thousand years ago, so there were no books detailing it.

I realized that I could very easily use my own [Enchant] spell to mass produce all kinds of goods and make a fortune, but that would have affected Felsen’s income big-time... so the idea was a no-go.

As I pondered various magic arts, our carriage passed through the castle town and made it to the royal abode.

Felsen castle didn’t look like the French fortress I’d initially imagined. Instead, it more readily resembled a classic British castle. It felt very dignified and rustic. It let off such a traditional aura that it was easy to imagine this being a mage’s stronghold.

We reached the steps up to the main entrance. Knight King Reinhard went on ahead and I followed behind him. Then, I looked up and saw a man waiting for us by the entrance.

He looked to be in his forties, at least. He was extremely tall and beefy, and he wore a gleaming suit of armor. He reminded me of a pro wrestler, or an American football player.

His beard covered the bottom half of his face, and his gray-black hair was shoddily swept back. He wore a beautiful white cape with golden stitching, and in his right hand was a magnificent silver scepter.

What caught my eye the most, though, was the scarring on his face.

What the hell, did he fight a tiger or something?

“Knight King of Lestia, Grand Duke of Brunhild... Welcome to Felsen, lads.” The giant of a man, King Boulanger Frost Felsen, grinned at us both.

“Ohoho... Bridges to Enlush island? Aye, I could see profits soaring if we all established trade that way. But....” I’d told the plan to

the King, but he stroked his beard and seemed apprehensive.

“Something wrong?”

“Aye, see... Even if we build this bridge, Enlush Island is Lestian territory, ain’t it? What if Lestia decides to halt passage through the island based on their own whims, eh?”

“That’s not a problem. When the bridges are completed, the island will be divided into four territories. Each country will own that segment of the island, and ten percent of the trade toll will go to Brunhild. The Grand Duke’s nation will be building the bridges and clearing out the monsters, after all.” Reinhard quickly calmed the concerns of Felsen’s King.

I’d have been happy to build the bridges for free and leave them to it, but Doge Audrey of Roadmare told me I should take responsibility for the bridges in case issues came up in the future, so I went along with it.

The costs wouldn’t be all that much, but they did add up since the bridges would end up being quite long. The countries would all pay me back for the expenses by giving me ten percent of the bridge tolls. I also said I wouldn’t take any further money from them after they paid me the full amount. It would take about ten years at most if the bridges saw frequent use. Though I wouldn’t have minded them paying me in bigger chunks if they could afford it.

Initially, I just planned on installing instant transfer portals for all of the countries, but if they broke down I’d be the only one around to fix them. Bridges were the wisest choice, if I wanted to think about the future at least.

“Well then, Grand Duke... I’ll ask if you think you can really build four bridges of such a size.” A man I wasn’t fully familiar with spoke up. He was sitting at the same table as us. His eyes were a deep blue, and they gazed at me with hawk-like intensity. This man was Felsen’s prime minister. If I recalled correctly, his name was Amond.

“I can do it in about three days once I have the materials. I’m not making anything extremely flashy, just bridges.”

“I’m doubtful you could do such a thing in a mere three days... Even if you used those giant Frame Gear things, four bridges in such a short amount of time is absurd, no?” Amond directed a gaze laced with doubt in my direction. I didn’t exactly blame him for being wrong, but I wasn’t going to use my Frame Gears at all.

I’d simply use the Workshop to make the bridges in the same way I did for Brunhild Castle. It was more work than usual, but the Workshop was being powered by the Tower’s reactor, so it was definitely up to the task.

“My Frame Gears won’t be involved. I have something that can take the materials and move them to the right spot. To put it simply,

it's something that can take a bunch of stones and place them down in the shape of a bridge."

"...Is this an artifact?"

"Er, something like that. Only I can use it, though." The man who just butted in was a gaunt, creepy looking guy. I couldn't tell what he was thinking. His eyes were dead and glazed over until just a moment ago, but they came to life the moment I mentioned my capabilities. He was Felsen's court magician. Ludo, I believe he was called.

"Why is it only you can use it, Grand Duke?"

"The only thing I can tell you is that's just how the artifact works. Even within my own country, the details are confidential... Sorry."

"I... see... How unfortunate." Ludo sighed slightly, and his eyes went back to that dead glaze. Seemed like he didn't care much about things that weren't exciting.

The King of Felsen gave me a small smile.

"Forgive his lack of manners. He's been researchin' a lot lately, gets him real tired."

"Oh, don't worry. I'm not offended." I was used to people acting like him, anyway. I had Belfast's court magician Charlotte, and Leen back home. They both lit up whenever I mentioned unusual stuff, but weren't that enthused otherwise.

The people seated at the table, other than myself, were the Knight King of Lestia, Felsen's King, Prime Minister Amond, Court Magician Ludo, and one other who finally decided to speak up.

"Grand Duke... You possess many fascinating artifacts, and those giant warriors as well. Did you perhaps come across them in a certain set of ruins?"

"...Some of them, but not all. Some of them are of my own making."

"I see, I see... Indeed, you can use the **[Enchant]** spell... Not to mention the fact that you have mastery over all elements. Quite the enviable position." The man both commenting and chuckling softly was Easeus, Chief Officer of Felsen's Magical Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He was in charge of all the mages, craftsmen, and merchants in the country. He had wavy gray hair, and wore a pair of sunglasses. I had no idea sunglasses even existed in this world... They also definitely had some kind of magical effect on them, though I couldn't tell what. At any rate, I knew for a fact they were enchanted sunglasses.

I found it suspicious, to be honest. Still, I couldn't exactly accuse a guy of being suspicious just for the crime of wearing some smooth shades.

After meeting the King of Felsen, I definitely didn't think he was the one behind the stolen Frame Gear. Reinhard had been right to

consider him a good man. There was always the chance he was hiding his true self, but I highly doubted that.

As for Prime Minister Amond, Court Magician Ludo, or Chief Officer Easeus...

Any one of them could've been the mastermind I sought. It was possible the culprit was operating without the King's knowledge, after all. All three of them had considerable power within the country, so it wasn't an unreasonable assumption.

I had to push such thoughts out of my head, though. It wouldn't have been right of me to baselessly judge the people around me.

"Well, a bridge sounds mighty fine to me. Just like the others, we'll pay a portion to Brunhild to cover the costs."

"Your Highness... Is that the decision we've come to?" Prime Minister Amond turned to the King, as if to confirm the choice.

"The country that misses out on this deal will lose a lot of money, I'd wager. Plus, I sure as hell don't think the other three would conspire to attack us or anything. Hell, the grand duke of Brunhild is handling the intricacies of the stuff, so he'd help us out if trouble came up, right?"

"I would, yes." The four countries shared friendly relations, but I wasn't entirely sure if that peace would last forever. It was entirely possible that the bridges could be used as routes for invasion. That was why I planned on putting defensive fortifications along each bridge to try and prevent that.

"Alright, now we got that outta the way... Hey, Grand Duke. Would you mind coming with me? I wanna show you something." The King of Felsen grinned broadly in my direction as he spoke. Something in his eyes seemed terribly bold. *Huh... What could he want?*



"Whoa..."

"Well? Pretty sweet, huh?" The King of Felsen had brought me to his treasury. There were weapons on fancy pedestals, and even more lining the walls.

Swords, spears, bows, axes, greatswords, daggers, katanas, scythes, chains, and many more... I looked around and noticed each weapon on display was forged of some kind of rare metal, and the vast majority had enchantments, too.

There were way too many... Both I and the Knight King were left utterly speechless. Typically, you'd find this kind of array in the armory, not the King's personal stash.

"This axe here is about five-hundred years old. It was wielded by a legendary Dragon Slayer named Buckram. It's even enchanted with a fire spell! Buckram was unable to use magic, you see, so this axe was a

mighty boon for the hero.” The axe in his hand was a gleaming red. The King proudly held it up. It certainly looked well-weathered.

“You like weapons a lot, huh?”

“Aw shucks... Don’t misunderstand or nothing, it’s just that, uh... rather than hoarding weapons... I like the stories behind weapons. Great heroes and heroines, their lives, their mastery of their craft. It’s those stories that truly make me gasp in awe.” That was certainly understandable. It seemed that the King of Felsen had amassed quite a collection of stories.

“I know it ain’t exactly becoming of a man my age, but I’m filled with such excitement when I think of the people that once held these in their hands. I adore their stories, and each one of them had a unique resolve. As a child, I’d read about the great heroes of yore for hours.” This man was definitely not a good fit for a magic country. Honestly, I wondered if they’d be okay under his leadership.

“When I was a little brat, I thought I’d be a hero too. I went into the forests and tussled with monsters aplenty. Even had a particularly nasty encounter with a Tiger Bear, once. That’s how I got this.” He pointed to the scarring on his face with an amused grin.

Tiger Bears... Those are regular bears with tiger stripes, right? Pretty sure Yae had a guild quest to kill those a long time ago. But man, fighting one of those as a kid...? This guy is something else.

“Honestly, Grand Duke? I’m pretty darned jealous of ya. Dragon slaying, Golem busting, Demon killing? You adventure all the time, you know? If my big bro hadn’t have died, I’d have liked to have lived a life like you.” Well, my situation was a little different... I was an adventurer before I was royalty, after all.

“Oh right, you use an unusual weapon, don’tcha? Can I take a look at it?” The King timidly pointed toward my waist. Brunhild was hardly a secret, so I unholstered it and showed him.

“This is Brunhild. It bears the same name as my nation. I can use this weapon up close or at range. Designed the whole thing myself, too.” I shifted the weapon into a blade. He almost jumped back in surprise for a moment when he saw it extend, but his eyes were full of curiosity.

“You really made this yourself...? I can’t believe it... It’s incredible.”

“The grand duke of Brunhild is a tremendous craftsman. The sword I carry today is actually a gift from him.” Knight King Reinhard drew the sword at his waist and gently placed it on a nearby table. It was the crystal blade I’d made for him, the one that resembled Lestia’s Holy Sword.

“Oh! Incredible... What a masterwork...” Both weapons were forged of phrasium, and no other in the world except me could smith

them into weapons.

“You received it as a gift, you said...?”

“I did, yes. It was a coronation gift. I’ve carried it by my side ever since. It is a tremendously sharp blade, and it’s also remarkably light. The only weakness is just how certain of victory it makes you feel,ahaha...” I highly doubted he’d used the sword much in actual combat. It was strong enough to kill anything up to the strength of an Upper Construct, so he probably really could beat anything around with it.

The King of Felsen gazed at the blade with envious eyes, and then he turned to me.

“Hey, Grand Duke... Could you perhaps make me something, as well? As a gift between peers.”

Hmm... Well, I guess that’d be fine. It’s not like phrasium is super secret these days or anything. And even if I make one more, I doubt they’ll be able to make anything from it. The worst it’ll do is add one more cool weapon to his collection.

“Sure, I don’t see why not. What did you have in mind?”

“Wh— Really?! Th-Thank you! Let me think... A sword, for sure, yes... And can you enchant it?”

“Uh, sure. But don’t ask for too much, that’d be a problem.” I didn’t want to make him too strong of a weapon. If I enchanted it with some of that ancient stuff I’d been studying, it’d be monstrous. That would likely be counteracted by his own low mana reserves, though... He’d just collapse after one swing. Still, it was possible to design weapons that tapped into the magic of multiple people, allowing more usage than usual.

“Perhaps... something that could protect against poison or paralysis...? Y’got something that can cure ails like that?”

Poison... Paralysis? Sounds pretty dangerous... I decided that a blade with **[Recovery]** would likely do the job.

“I can do that, but are you sure that’s what you want?”

“Yup. That’s what I want. As for the width of the blade... It should be, uh... See here? It should be about the width of this blade. Oh, by the way, this one was wielded by the wandering spellsword Gandal. He used to conjure sandstorms with this mighty—” He was about to start a full-on lecture about the history of the sword, so I quickly went to make the weapon for him.

I pulled out some phrasium fragments from **[Storage]** and used **[Modeling]** to give them a similar shape to Gandal’s sword. I copied the design for the blade perfectly, but I changed the hilt, deciding to adorn it with the Felsen royal emblem, too. It looked good from where I was standing.

After that, I enchanted it with **[Gravity]** for reduced weight, and

the **[Recovery]** effect he wanted.

The King of Felsen took it into his hands and waved it around a little. He said it was a tad too light. I thought light was fine, but he said he liked a little weight on his blades or he couldn't feel it too well. I didn't quite understand, but I obliged.

"Heheh... This is wonderful... What a powerful blade!"

"If you pour your magic through the hilt of the blade, the recovery spell should trigger. It'll take a lot of magical power, though, so the drawback is it can't be used by just anyone, and even then it can't be used a lot in one go."

"Gotcha. I'll give it a go."

Huh? How? The King of Felsen answered that question by picking up a golden dagger and slicing his left arm with it. His face immediately turned a sickly white, and he began to sweat profusely. He looked like he was in agonizing pain.

"Th... This dh...gh.... dagger w-was wielded bh... by Alejandro th... the valiant... th-thief...! Ah... A-A-As you, ngh... can s-see... it's e-enchanted with a... with... a poison! Al-Alejandro used... khh.... th-this blade, to... th..."

"Now's not the time for a history lesson!"

Is this guy an idiot?! The old man poured his magical power into the hilt of the sword, and **[Recovery]** finally triggered. His body immediately lost all signs of strain.

Both myself and the Knight King let out relieved sighs. If he had died like that, we'd have been in huge trouble. There were Felsen and Lestia knights alike in the room with us, though... I was surprised neither stepped in and stopped him.

"Wow... I sure am healed, huh...? That was incredible!"

"...Now hold on a minute. What would you have done if you didn't have enough magic?"

"I'm a member of the royal family, lad. A strong, deep pool of magic runs through my veins. Plus, even if I didn't have enough, you'd have healed me, right?"

Of course I would've, but did it not cross your mind that I might have had malicious intentions?! I could've lied about the sword or just not healed you! The Knight King looked at me with a small, knowing smile. This guy was the epitome of show, don't tell. I couldn't possibly finger him as the Frame Gear thief.

"Still... the fact that you asked for a sword to cure ailments... Are you worried about being poisoned or something?"

"Hm? No, nah... It's just that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." The King of Felsen seemed cheery, but it felt like misdirection to me. Part of me just felt that the man's life was in danger, but I wasn't sure how... I wondered if everything was okay in

Felsen.

“On another note! There was another matter I wished to discuss with you, Grand Duke, if you have the time.”

“Sure, what’s up?”

Is this the part where he tells me about the stolen Frame Gear? Do you know where the mastermind is, old man?! Or is this about your paranoia about being poisoned? What’s the plot here?

“Aha... W-Well... Err... I’m turning forty-two just this year, but... I am yet unmarried.”

“...R-Right.”

“My big bro was the one to succeed the throne, so I didn’t get married off or nothing when I was young, and I didn’t really care all that much for romance. Plus, I couldn’t really find anyone who clicked with me, so I ended up putting it off... But I’ve found myself blessed by fate, I believe. A chance encounter that must have been ordained.” It was a little gross seeing a brawny old guy looking so bashful. I just wanted to know what he was getting at.

“Could it be you’re getting married?”

“Y-Yes, Knight King Reinhard, I am.” The Knight King threw the flailing man a bone.

Oh, so that’s what he meant. This guy isn’t good at being direct when it comes to romance, huh? Still, a guy who can grin like that being all flustered? A little creepy...

“Ah, well... Congratulations, then. So what did you want to talk over with me?”

“Aye, well... It’s just that, er... Can you wait, actually? It might be best if you meet...” The King of Felsen said something to a guard, and the guard in question bolted out of the room at once. I wondered what that was all about.

After a short while, there was a knock at the door. The King said “Come in!” and a woman clad in a pastel blue dress appeared.

Huh...? She looks around my age. Maybe older? Gotta be seventeen or eighteen... She had beautiful, short, silver hair. I also felt a strength of character in her eyes.

Wait... haven’t I met this girl before?

“It is a great pleasure to meet you both for the first time, Grand Duke of Brunhild, Knight King of Lestia... Thank you for honoring me with your presence.”

“Hehe... Oh, uhm. This is my fiancée, Ellicia.”

Wait, wait... This is the fiancée...? Isn’t that a twenty-five year difference? You two look like parent and child when you’re next to each other! Don’t tell me the King of Felsen is into little...

“I am in your debt, Grand Duke, for the wonderful care you have granted to my little sister. I’m happy to finally get a chance to meet

you.”

“Huh?” My thoughts were cut off by Ellicia’s dazzling smile. *Uh... Sister?*

“Do forgive me for my late self-introduction. My name is Ellicia Leah Regulus. How is Lucia doing?”

“Oh. Ohhh!” *I was wondering where I knew you from! You look like a slightly older version of Lu!* She had told me that her sister was studying in Felsen, but this was a surprise indeed. I was completely blindsided by the encounter.

But wait... the princess of Regulus and the King of Felsen...? They’re a good match socially, but... i-isn’t this a little criminal?

I quietly redacted that train of thought once I reminded myself that I was, in fact, engaged to the girl’s thirteen-year-old sister.

Though, our age gap is only four years... That’s totally fine... It’s fine... I kept telling myself it was fine. *Wait, hold on a second... If Ellicia’s my sister-in-law through my marriage to Lu... then won’t her marriage to the old king make him my brother-in-law?! Whaaat!*

“Is something the matter?” The Knight King, one of my other brothers-in-law to be, asked me if I was alright.

“I-I’m fine... I’m just happy to have Jutaro and Reinhard around as brothers-in-law...”

“Hm?” I quietly muttered my thanks in a voice nobody else could hear.

Wait, I totally forgot about the crown prince of Regulus.

That’s not my fault, though... He’s so forgettable! His name was uh... Lux, right... Right?

Holy crap. I’ve actually forgotten his face. He’s a nice guy, but he has left absolutely zero impression.

I mentally apologized to Lux, then moved on from that train of thought.

“So, you had something to discuss?”

“Right, yes... Uhm, ahaha... It’s about my marriage to Ellicia, y-you see... We haven’t actually told Regulus about it.”

“Wait what? Wouldn’t that typically be the first thing you do?”

What, did you propose just yesterday or something? I guess I can take you over there if you want.

“I came to this country in order to study the mechanics of magic. The King of Felsen gladly decided to mentor me, and... over time, as I came to him for advice, well...” My sister-in-law to be looked down with a red face. I still didn’t exactly understand what had happened. Did she seriously just fall in love with this old weapon fanatic just because he kept teaching her? I know the phrase “whatever floats your boat,” but this girl’s boat sure floated in an unusual direction.

Still, a princess studying magical mechanics in a foreign land was

unusual to begin with.

The King of Felsen turned to me and, with a surprisingly meek expression, spoke up.

“Look, lad... His Majesty the Emperor of Regulus entrusted me with his daughter. She was sent here for true and legitimate academic reasons, aye? I don’t regret taking her as my fiancée, but... I can’t help but feel I’ve undermined his trust somehow. That’s why I thought perhaps you could help me smooth things over, understand?”

I understood well enough. There was always the chance that the Emperor said something like “How dare you corrupt my little girl! It’s war! It’s war, damn it!” I didn’t expect that kind of response from the calm and collected person I knew, though.

But still, he’d have two minds about it. He’d have to think about it as an emperor, and as a dad. Things were settled simply enough when I got engaged to Lu, but this situation was a little different.

“Well, ultimately, you can’t not tell him, right? There’s no real choice here. You just need to get it together and tell him the full story. I can send you to Regulus right now.”

“J-Just out of the blue like that?! M-My heart... My heart isn’t prepared!”

“If you continue to stand in one place, you’re never gonna take any steps forward. Have you never heard the saying that there’s no time like the present?”

“N-No, I haven’t...”

Oh... Does that proverb not exist here? Oh well. I sent a letter through a Gate Mirror to arrange a visit to Regulus.

The Knight King looked at me with mild concern in his eyes.

“Are you sure this is fine? Can you really take away the King of Felsen like this?”

“It’d be a pain if Felsen’s administration made out like I kidnapped him, yeah... Maybe I should have Regulus come here?”

“But then, what about the safety of the Emperor?”

“Hey now, nothing like that’ll happen while I’m around.” Naturally, I planned on bringing their guards over, too.

I asked the King of Felsen if they had any rooms suitable for hosting a small audience, and he had his men prepare one immediately.

We’d finally let him say “Please entrust me with your daughter!” His partner wasn’t all that much older than me, though... Felt a little weird, to be frank.

The King of Felsen ran off in a panic, desperate to change into something fancier. But, for some reason, he got stuck at the door.

“Th-The door! The door! Something’s wrong with the door!”

“Y-Your Majesty... P-Push the door, don’t pull!”

“Wh-What?! Oh, right!” He wrenched open the door with a furious force and started barreling down the hallway. He looked absolutely frantic.

“Is he gonna be okay...?”

“Hehe... Don’t worry, that side of him is adorable.” I forced a smile in Ellicia’s direction. She was open about her love, which was nice, but...

I think you and I have different standards for adorable, miss...

After I thought about it a little more, I realized those two weirdos were probably perfect for each other.



“I see... So that’s the story?” The King of Felsen and the second princess of Regulus, who was red in the face and glaring at the floor, sat before the Emperor of Regulus.

“If you had asked to take my daughter as a mistress or concubine, I certainly would have felt differently... But a legal, binding marriage that ties the fates of our nations together? I understand.”

“Father?”

“Th-Then you mean...”

“I have no reason to refuse this, no. But... Touya?”

“Yeah?” The Emperor turned his gaze towards me. I was seated at another table with the Knight King.

“Could you please use your magic to prevent noise escaping this room?”

“Huh? Sure...?” I cast **[Silence]** to completely soundproof the area. I couldn’t help but wonder what the Emperor wanted to say, though.

“It’s done. Not a word will get out.”

“Very well. Then, Touya... Have you discussed that matter with the King of Felsen, yet?” *That... matter? Oh, the stolen Frame Gear?*

“No. I haven’t brought it up yet. I didn’t really think it was appropriate, given the circumstances.” I personally didn’t think the King of Felsen was the one behind the robbery, but I figured there was still a tiny chance. I hadn’t reached my decision, but it seemed like the Emperor was keen to have us discuss it.

“Well, I must say that I cannot allow Ellicia to be engaged to this man until the matter is resolved. You understand, yes?”

“Well... I mean, I understand, but still...”

“Er... Wh-What matter, exactly? Y-You won’t allow us to marry? If I’ve done something wrong, please tell me! I’ll set it right immediately!” The King of Felsen stood up and immediately began panicking. I told him to sit down and began explaining the situation.

I told him about the battle in Roadmare, about how Frame Gear

pieces were stolen, and about how the trade route pointed toward Felsen as the perpetrators.

“What...? I assure you, my nation would never do such a thing! We’d never take advantage of a battle like that... Please, believe me!”

“We do believe you. I don’t think you were personally responsible for it, not at all. But we do believe that the ones who are live in this nation. Do you have any idea who could be behind it?” This time, Reinhard stood up to reassure the man. It seemed to work. What was important was that the King didn’t think we were suspecting him in particular.

In response, the King of Felsen began stroking his beard and thinking to himself.

“If I were to think about people that wanted to make use of ancient technologies... My mind would immediately go to Gordian, the Golden Order... Perhaps...?”

“What’s this Gordian?” I suddenly butted in, since that word stood out to me. I’d heard of the Gordian Knot in my own world, after all.

“Felsen is the magic kingdom because we research all manner of magical techniques, yes...? There also exists magic that society would brand as taboo, however...”

“Taboo magic...?”

“Indeed. Taboo magic includes unbreakable curses and sacrificial magic that may cause wide-spread disaster. It’s a form of magic that can lead only to ruin. Hence the name, taboo. Forbidden.”

Curses and cataclysms, h-huh...?

“Felsen explicitly forbids the research of taboo magic, but there are still those that indulge. These people attempt to revive ancient techniques and make use of them, out of sight. This is the purpose of Gordian, the Golden Order.”

“I think I understand... So you’re saying these fellows are the most likely ones to have taken Touya’s Frame Gear?”

“Perhaps, but all I can do is guess. Their purpose is not just to revive taboo techniques, but also how to recreate powerful and dangerous artifacts from the old world. I’ve been told that their members include mages, craftsmen, engineers, merchants, and more scholarly types.” The Emperor of Regulus and the King of Felsen nodded to one another as each spoke. Meanwhile, I was getting a little uneasy.

The reason for that was simple... *I... can use taboo magic, I have a lot of it...*

Babylon’s Library held a lot of those ancient tomes, after all.

I didn’t realize just how dangerous those books were... I’ve even used some of those spells... P-Plus, I cursed some guys, as well...

I decided not to say anything. I knew it would be best to keep my

trap shut and have an eye out for anything unusual in my own magic research. A big part of me felt it was a little too late to be careful at this point, though.

Still, the cataclysmic spells I knew didn't need sacrifices or anything. They took a monstrous amount of magical power, that was for sure, so they couldn't ordinarily be used unless thousands of people channeled them at once. In a crowd like that, it wouldn't be surprising to have a few people collapse from magic exhaustion. It felt to me like people probably exaggerated those stories over the years, giving the spells the modern reputation they had now. Still, they were definitely strong enough to sink small islands.

"Touya, can you use your tracking magic to find members of this Gordian organization?"

"Only if I know their faces... Otherwise, it'd have to be features I could recognize at a glance." I quickly responded to the Emperor's question. The main issue was how many magical barriers they had in Felsen. Even regular homes had rudimentary ones in place. It wasn't like I could go door-to-door either, and I had no idea if the culprit was actually in the area.

"It'll be hard to find them, I think. They don't move in the open because they were watched with scrutiny at one point. Or rather it'd be more appropriate to say that Gordian... the Golden Order... was already destroyed in the past."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Twenty years ago, Gordian made a bold attempt to resurrect ancient taboo rituals. But my big brother, Leold Frost Felsen, gave his life to prevent them from gaining too much power. It was formally reported as a magical accident to the other nations, but... the truth is my brother died in the battle with Gordian. They blew themselves up and took his life with theirs."

"The late king went there by himself?" Reinhard spoke up in a curious manner. I could understand why he was questioning it. I couldn't think of a reason why the leader of a country would go directly to such a dangerous place. That would typically be something left to one's guardsmen.

"Well, to tell you the truth... the one in charge of Gordian was a close friend of my big brother. He never expected that a man he considered family would be at the forefront of such a wicked order... My brother was a man with a strong and righteous sense of justice. He likely wanted to right the mistakes he felt responsible for." I could feel the sadness in his voice. Ellicia looked at him with mournful eyes. I could definitely feel the love and concern she had for him... but I still felt as though they were more like parent and child.

"But wait... if you believe that Gordian has revived, then who

could be at their helm?"

"That, well... Only one person comes to mind. I don't know where he is right now, or what he's been doing with his life..."

"Who?"

"Galzeld Goldie. He's the son of the former Gordian leader, Garland Goldie."

"The son, huh...? It definitely wouldn't be unusual for him to succeed his father." The whole idea of a society dedicated to resurrecting taboo artifacts and spells... It was a little weird to me, honestly.

The previous Golden Order might have had that kind of objective, but... There was a nagging feeling in the back of my mind that told me this Neo-Gordian wasn't working toward the same ends. That was just a feeling I had, though.

I was muttering to myself, so the Emperor of Regulus spoke up.

"Nothing can come of this discussion if we know nothing about the enemy. However, I believe it's in your best interests to be mindful of such individuals in your nation."

"You're right, yes... Felsen will keep a dutiful eye, I promise. If I hear anything at all, I'll let you know." I gave three Gate Mirrors to the King of Felsen just in case he needed to urgently contact us. Through them he'd be able to send messages to Brunhild, Regulus, or Lestia. I gave the Emperor and the Knight King corresponding Gate Mirrors, too.

The items I handed out caught the attention of Princess Ellicia. She kept passing papers through them and marveling every time they came back out.

... *What are you doing?* I didn't have any right to be too surprised, since she came over to Felsen in pursuit of magical knowledge and all.

"Alrighty... Now I have everyone's permission, shall I start on the bridges?" I let the others know my intentions.

"A-Aye, but... I know it's bold of me to ask, but... it'll truly only take three days?" *Heh... Guess he really did find it hard to believe.*

Enlush Island was smack dab in the middle of the Rondo Sea, and it was positively teeming with monsters. Thankfully, the water current wasn't too harsh, though. My plan was to raise up the bottom of the sea in key strategic areas and have those pillars serve as the foundations. Then, I'd use Babylon to bring over the bridge pieces and build it like that.

The bridges would be really long, so I figured I'd need to place a few rest stops along them as well, so I'd add broader areas where the bridge would be a bit wider. That way they'd be able to install stations with food and the like. If the countries put guards there, they'd be able to keep the peace along the trade routes. Installing toilets would

probably be a good idea, too.

Frankly, I wanted trains to be able to run along them, but I was planning too far ahead for that. I was definitely going to make the bridges broad enough to allow for tracks in the future, though.

Alright, let's get the foundations out of the way for now. I also had to do something about the number of monsters and magical beasts, so I decided to work on that while the Workshop prepared the bridge pieces.

It wasn't like when I founded Brunhild, so I couldn't just kill them all. There were a ton of them, too.

I figured the best thing to do would be to move several of them to my dungeons, and put the rest on Dragoness Island. The Dragons would probably be grateful for the food supply, and it would stop them from moving out toward other territories. Then again, half of them had been killed by members of my knight order, so they probably weren't hurting too badly for resources.

Okay, let's get to work!



"I-Incredible..."

"No way..." The leaders of Lestia, Roadmare, Ryle, and Felsen were all gathered at the edge of the bridge. They were staring across the seemingly endless horizon with mouths agape.

It had been three days since I began. The bridges were all completed to schedule. Everyone had gathered in Lestia for the grand opening.

"I enhanced the raw materials you all provided and put them to use on the bridges. They're extremely robust, so they should be able to handle weather and time just fine."

"How many years do you imagine they'll last?"

"I'm not sure precisely, but I think they should hold for about a thousand years or so."

"A thousand...?!" Doge Audrey stared in disbelief.

The stone bridge in front of us was plenty sturdy, and it was constructed in a simple arch design. I was absolutely confident that even several mages firing a barrage of **[Explosion]** magic at it wouldn't cause it to crumble. I'd taken great care in strengthening it, after all.

I teleported everyone over to the rest stop, which was a large area that spread out in all directions. There were various structures there, including benches, washrooms, and small houses.

"There are rest stops like this every few kilometers. You can easily set up food and drink vendors in them. If you post guards here, then travelers should be able to relax and rest, too."

“Indeed. Travelers and traders are gonna be paying to cross it, after all. It’s not likely we’d get any thieves or bandits, but guards should patrol to prevent disputes.” The King of Felsen nodded slightly. Everyone took their personal guards with them and freely walked around the rest area. There were little plots of shrubbery and flowers here and there, as well. I wanted to go for a comforting, natural look.

After everyone was done, I took us to Enlush Island.

“See this down here? I haven’t just put stone markers in the ground for no reason. These stone posts mark territorial boundaries. This place used to belong to Lestia, but now everyone gets a piece. I’ve placed these markers here to designate the individual territories, so don’t forget.” I projected a map into the air and showed an image of the whole island. They were free to build settlements on their own territories, of course. It was their land. I didn’t really feel like interfering too much in those matters at all. If they made settlements, or combined all four into one big settlement, then that had nothing to do with me. I thought it’d be nice if they could make a trading hub, though.

“W-Weren’t there many ferocious magical beasts on Enlush Island...?” The King of Ryle nervously glanced around as he spoke. He was a small, fat man with a long white beard. I remembered being informed he was partially dwarven. When I pictured a dwarven man in my mind, it conjured up the image of a hardy, stubborn man who worked well with his hands and could drink you under the table. The King of Ryle, however, was completely different. He was gentle, mild, couldn’t handle his booze, and quite clumsy.

I’d never actually met any dwarves in this world, but I heard a lot of them lived in Ryle. Those ones, so I’d been told, matched up more closely to the traditional image in my mind. I definitely wanted to meet them sometime.

“I’ve wiped out pretty much every magical beast on Enlush Island. The ones that are left aren’t very threatening.”

“Wiped... out?”

“I warped most of them to an island full of Dragons. They’re probably being eaten right about now.” The King of Ryle shook his head in disbelief.

The lack of magical beasts on the island might have negatively impacted the ecosystem, but it was better than having people’s lives threatened. I also summoned a Kraken and let it loose in the Rondo Sea, so the surrounding waters would be safe.

“Hm... Well then, as all four leaders are here... Shall we discuss basic trade agreements and toll amounts? I’m sure it won’t take us that long.”

“Oh, if you guys are gonna do that... I’ll fetch you guys a table and

chairs, and then excuse myself.”

“Thank you. Sorry for the exclusion.” Doge Audrey made an apologetic smile, but I told her not to worry about it. I brought a set of chairs and a table out of **[Storage]**. The four of them sat down and set to work on their plans for trade and building on the island. I finally had some free time to myself, but it wasn’t like I could just go home, since they had to be brought back to their respective nations, too.

I had an idea. I’d been keeping Dragon meat in my **[Storage]**, along with some other stuff. I decided I’d prepare lunch for everyone.

I took out the ingredients, a small cooking stand, and the utensils. I figured I’d just make some Dragon skewers.

I sliced up the Dragon meat and put the chunks on a few skewers along with some veggies. Then, I applied salt and pepper seasoning, and spread out the plates. After that, I took out a BBQ set and lit the charcoal inside. All I needed to do after that was fit on the wire mesh.

I decided to take out another dish right after. Mismede’s specialty, curry. They called it cully, but... Well, it was about the same. I had Crea cook it for me earlier. It was actually about a month earlier, but time didn’t pass within my **[Storage]** space, so it was still fresh.

Either way, I continued preparing until I created my magnum opus... The joined Mismede-Eashen deluxe meal, Curry Rice. I prepared two types. Spicy, and sweet. Mismede’s cully was super spicy by default, after all.

Finally, I prepared a few pitchers of fruity water... I’d have liked some pickles, but there were none around.

“Er... Touya?” I turned around when Reinhard called out to me, only to find all of them staring at me.

“You’re making something...? It looks really good, what is it?”

“I figured I’d make lunch for everyone. It’s grilled Dragon meat with curry rice. Did you guys finish talking already?”

“Well... it’s less that we finished and more we wrapped things up after we saw you. We have the vague terms down, at least... But, um, what is that ‘curry rice’ you have there?”

“Oh, it’s Eashen fusion. I combined Eashen rice with Mismede’s cully. It’s much more mild, so people who have low tolerance for spice can enjoy it too.” I served up a portion of the sweet curry rice and put it on a plate. Then, I handed it over to Doge Audrey’s personal guard, Knight Commander Limit.

I didn’t give it to Audrey herself, naturally. This food was something made by a foreign king, so it needed to be taste-tested.

She scooped it up with a spoon and smiled broadly.

“This is incredible... I’ve eaten cully in Mismede before, but this isn’t nearly as spicy... I like this a lot more.”

“Don’t worry, guys. There’s enough for all. Your guards, too.” I brought out a ton of tables and chairs from my **[Storage]**. I kept on grilling more Dragon skewers on the BBQ, and everyone sat down to tuck into their new meal.

“Mm! Great grub!”

“Amazing... It’s only a little spicy, I like it.”

“Mmh... I wouldn’t mind having this at home...”

“Touya, do you have the recipe...?”

“It’s not hard to make, but you can only get the rice from Eashen at the moment. I’m planning on growing some myself in Brunhild soon.” It seemed like the curry rice was a big hit. Ieyahsu had given me a ton of rice as thanks for helping him, but I definitely wanted to start growing my own.

Everyone finished their portions, then even went to get some more! There was more than enough, luckily.

Plus, they all seemed to love the skewers, too. Still, all I did was cook up the meat and add some seasoning... It wasn’t even like I was the one who made the curry to begin with...

I gave everyone there the recipe and a few bags of rice and spices so they could make it for their families. They seemed satisfied with the food, so I was satisfied too. It’d probably end up increasing demands for rice and spices on the global market. Truly, curry was a magnificent thing.



Interlude II: The Daughters of Babylon

“Goo-goo... Ga-ga...” I cradled Prince Yamato in my arms, as he reached out his hands and mumbled incomprehensibly.

“He’s definitely gotten heavier.”

“Children grow fast. He’s only going to get bigger as time goes on.” The King of Belfast grinned broadly as he watched his son babbling happily in my arms. Queen Yuel, who was seated next to him, smiled wryly.

Holding the baby really drove home how adorable he was. I was engaged, so I had plenty of siblings-in-law, but this baby was the only one younger than me.

There were plenty of younger children at Elze and Linze’s place, but those were technically my cousins.

“He’s so cute. Makes me wish I had a little brother or sister.” Sue whispered as she peered in from Yamato’s side, and her parents, Duke Ortlinde and Lady Ellen averted their gazes awkwardly. Innocence could certainly be cruel.

Then, I handed over Prince Yamato to Yumina, who was waiting patiently to receive him. Cradling her little brother, Yumina began rocking him in her arms.

“Yamato. It’s me, your big sister.” The Belfasts didn’t come over often, so she was probably worried he’d forgotten about her. However, she had nothing to worry about. He was smiling more broadly than he did in my arms.

“In a few years, you may well very be holding your own child in your arms like that.”

“Little Yamato’ll be an uncle before he knows it. Or well, at least I should hope so.”

“Hahaha, right...” I laughed stiffly, trying to avoid the royal couple’s suggestive words.

What in the world are they saying?! Yumina turned aside, pretending to have not heard what they were saying, but she was visibly red to her ears.

“I’ll bear Touya’s child too! And if it ends up being a girl, she can be Yamato’s bride!” Sue proclaimed proudly and clung to me happily.

D-Do you have any idea what you’re saying?! You can’t promise a kid

that isn't even born yet to marriage!

“...Hmm. That doesn't sound too bad, actually. The Belfast family would be included in Touya's lineage... Good idea, that.” The King muttered pensively.

Huh? He's going along with that?! But I did wonder what would happen to their relationship if that happened. Yamato was Sue's cousin, so that would mean he'd be marrying his cousin's child. Cousins marrying wasn't unheard of, so I figured it wouldn't be all bad. In my case, it would be my brother-in-law marrying my daughter, and from the King's perspective, it would be his son marrying his younger brother's grandchild. It was all a little complicated for me to take in.

The plan was that I'd marry everyone when I turned eighteen, but I couldn't help wondering what I'd do about Sue. Marrying a twelve-year-old was a bit of an issue. Of course, I'd stand by my promise and marry her, but it'd have to wait a few years. Wait, then she'd be the only one to get left out...

“It'll take four, maybe five more years before you can give birth, Sue. And that kind of age gap isn't that big of an issue... Hmm.”

“Hey there. How about you cut it out right now? There's no point thinking that far ahead.”

“Oops, haha. I was just joking.” Rebuked by the queen, His Majesty smiled apologetically.

No, that definitely wasn't a joke. He was serious. Totally serious.

“Fwah... Gwah... Mah...”

“Oh? Mother, I think Yamato is sleepy.”

“Let's see... Yes, he certainly does seem to be. Alrighty, it's time for a nap.”

Taking her child from Yumina's hands, the queen carried him to a bed in an adjacent room. Yumina followed her along with Ellen and Sue.

With only the men left in the room, the duke lowered his voice and whispered to me.

“Ah, Touya... Regarding that matter...”

“Oh right. I checked that it's safe for use, and it seems to be alright. It's fairly potent, so make sure to take only one a day, alright? Taking too many won't change the effect any, and you'll be sluggish the next day from the excessive mana.” I warned the duke as I handed him a bottle filled with pills. I wished he didn't have to rely on them, though. When I told him that, the duke said that youth truly can be a bitter thing. I wondered what he meant.

“What's that?” His Majesty asked, noticing our conversation. It wasn't much of a secret to keep from another man, but telling the truth was a touch too awkward.

“Oh, that’s, uh... what they call, an energizing medicine... Put simply, it’s an aphrodisiac.”

“What?!”

“Sssh! No need to shout, Brother!” The duke covered His Majesty’s mouth. If the ladies were to hear that, he’d be ashamed to no end. Especially with the King’s daughter there.

“The other day, the duke brought the matter up and asked if I could help, so I had Flora make it for him. We tested it out by offering samples to clients at a brothel, and it was quite effective. They kept going on and on for several rounds...”

“I-Is that right... A-Al! Share some with me!”

“You have no need of it, Brother! On the other hand, I must produce Ortlinde’s heir!”

“Be quiet! Quiet! There’s another bottle!”

“Shut up!” Angry shouts lashed out at us from the other room. As I expected, we’d irritated them...

The two men, on the other hand, held the bottles excitedly and smiled broadly. I still didn’t really understand what all the fuss was about.

“It’s been ages since I visited Belfast’s capital.” I walked through the royal capital with Yumina by my side. I hadn’t even spent a year there, but it was still a very nostalgic place for me. It was where I got my omni-resistant coat, after all.

Yumina walked alongside me in her adventuring attire. The outfit was more comfortable for her, and there was no need for her to dress up in Brunhild, so she was used to it, too.

Our country didn’t have anything resembling nobility, after all. Obviously I was the Grand Duke, but that was more like being the chairman of the neighborhood association.

“It’s been a while since we’ve had a chance to hang out, too.”

“Has it? I guess so... It’s been pretty hectic lately.” I walked along the royal capital’s streets with Yumina, a bit embarrassed as her arms locked with mine.

We’d been really busy recently, like having to go to Eashen to defeat a servile god or constructing a bridge in Felsen. I was just telling Yumina how so much had been going on, but...

“I think it’s just you that’s been going around the world like that, Touya. I’ve been feeling kind of lonely, actually.”

“I’m sorry. I want to spend as much time as I can with all of you, too.”

“I know that. So even if I feel a bit bad for the other girls, I’m keeping you all to myself today.” That said, we did have some work to do.

Walking down the road, I saw several people riding bicycles. Bikes

had become quite popular in the royal capital. They were still fairly expensive, so only some affluent citizens could afford them, though.

We found our objective at a corner of the main road. The Reading Cafe, "Moon Reader." As we entered, we were greeted by the clerk, Wendy.

"Welcome... Oh, boss! It's been too long!"

"H-Hold up, Wendy! He's a monarch, you can't call him that!" The manager, Sylvie, scolded her, but I assured her that I was fine with it. Being called Grand Duke or something here would be all kinds of awkward.

"I've had Olba's firm take care of purchasing new books. Has that been going well?"

"It takes a while to receive them, but there aren't any problems, really." All the books were imbued with the **[Paralysis]** spell to ward off thieves and burglars. Having said that, Sylvie motioned toward the back of the counter, to a rack that looked almost like a photocopier. It'd been programmed to apply **[Paralysis]** to any purchased books.

"The books are selling well, and our cooking's been getting a good reputation lately, too."

Like Wendy said, Moon Reader seemed to be doing just fine. To be frank, even if the cafe didn't make much money, I wouldn't mind too much, since this place was kind of like a hobby to me. Still, hearing that business was flourishing made me happy.

"Oh, I brought some new books. I picked up some popular titles in Felsen, Roadmare, Lestia and Lyle. They're pretty hard to come by around here, though."

"Wow, thank you so much!" The books I pulled out of **[Storage]** piled up on the counter. And like always, there were some "female oriented" books included there, too.

After that I said hello to everyone, adjusted the shop's reclining seats, and left Moon Reader behind.

With this we had concluded our errands, so I spent the rest of the time hanging out with Yumina.

"This place really is huge compared to Brunhild."

"Makes sense. But the bigger a city becomes, the more places that are out of sight pop up."

That was certainly true. Outlaws and villainy could flourish in places that evaded the law's gaze. That thought made me think that perhaps it was high time I started bolstering the ranks of my country's knight order.

Hm...?

"What is it?" I stopped in front of a certain shop, and Yumina called out to me. Before me was a poster plastered to the shop's window.

“A spectacle of love and adventure! The epic tale of the hero Toyya, who challenged the deadly Black Dragon to save princess Yuina... Refreese’s major hit, delivered to you in a massive scale, finally arrives to Belfast... Touya, isn’t this...?” The poster was an advertisement for some exaggerated, dramatic play. I thought it was just a coincidence, but upon reading the names I realized that I wasn’t imagining things.

“Look here, Yumina.”

“What is it...? Scenario writer by Lil Refres, author of The Order of the Rose... Ah!” Yumina was shocked.

Lil Refres? The author behind that pen name was surely none other than the first princess of the Refreese Imperium, Reliel Rehm Refreese! The rotten princess herself.

“That little... I can’t believe she used us as material for her story.”

“This is about us, right Touya? Judging by the advertisement, it looks like a perfectly normal story...”

I don’t know about that. It’s kind of suspicious. I’d bet it has handsome fencers or dandy dukes or something like that. Well, guess I’ll just have to see it to find out. Depending on the content we might have to forbid them from making future performances.

The next performance in the capital theater was in about twenty minutes.

“Alright, let’s check it out.”

“Sure. It feels a little weird, but it should be fun.” Yeah, watching a play that’s blatantly modeled after you was strangely off-putting. Still, so long as it didn’t drag my name through the mud I couldn’t care less whether or not the story was interesting.

I spent the next two hours watching the play with Yumina. Thankfully, my concerns were unfounded, and it was a pretty average story. Though of course, it was pretty far removed from what actually happened.

I didn’t fight the Black Dragon one-on-one, and Yumina was taking refuge in Belfast’s palace. It wasn’t so much a dramatization as it was a whole new story. It might as well not have been me but some other hero. The guy playing Toyya’s role was really handsome, though. And the girl playing princess Yuina was cute, but nowhere near as cute as Yumina.

It was a story filled with harrowing adventure and exciting romance, so overall it was definitely worth a watch. When the play ended, the audience cheered and applauded. Seemed like that rotten princess could write a decent story after all. Surprisingly enough. Really surprisingly enough.

It was already getting dark out when we left the theater, and stars had already started to dot in the sky.

“It was really fun! Especially the scene where he confessed to the princess before fighting the Black Dragon! I was holding back tears!” Having heard Yumina say that, I imitated the hero from the play and knelt down before her, taking her small hand into mine. Yumina was shocked by my sudden action.

“Come what may, I pledge to protect you and become your sword and shield. So please, grace me with your smile. I would know no greater joy than to have you by my side, smiling. My love is yours. Now, and forevermore.” I recited the hero’s lines. I might have remembered it a bit wrong, but it sounded about right.

I looked up at Yumina, only to find tears in her eyes.

Wh-What, huh?! Did I say something to upset her? I straightened up in a hurry to apologize, but Yumina shook her head and wiped her tears away.

“It’s fine. I was just happy to hear those words coming from you, Touya...”

O-Oh. That’s good, then. I was scared for a second there.

But using lines from a play to move her felt a bit pathetic, honestly. I should have conveyed my own feelings, instead.

“Those lines... are what I really feel for you. I always want you to smile, Yumina. At first it was all sort of ambiguous, but now I can say for sure. I really do love you, Yumina. Please stay by my side. I want us to be together forever, always smiling. I’m so grateful I met you. Thank you so much.”

“Touya...” Yumina clung to me. Gently embracing her small body, I basked in my joy. These girls were my treasure. I wouldn’t forgive anyone who would hurt them. And so, I swore to protect them with everything I had.

After embracing for a while, we naturally drew into a kiss and smiled at each other.

“Let’s go home.”

“Yes.” We made our way back under the night sky, hand in hand.



The next day...

“So you went out with your fiancée and completely forgot about my request.”

“You’re right. I’m sorry.” We were in Babylon’s Library. Fam was seated on a chair, and in front of her was me, apologizing on my knees.



She wasn't visibly angry, but there was a certain pressure to her that didn't allow me to get a word out.

"And during your date, your head was full of dirty thoughts, was it not, Master? I suppose it stands to reason you would forget, then."

"That's not it!" Cesca, who was standing next to her, served us tea. *The hell are you doing here anyway?!*

Either way, it was true I forgot about that promise, so I apologized to Fam earnestly.

"I'll buy it next time, I promise."

"I cannot wait that long." She shot me down immediately. I knew that was the kind of girl she was, but she really had nothing going for her in terms of social skills.

The promise was just that I would get her books from the world down on the surface, but apparently she was looking forward to it too much. Now she wouldn't forgive me.

It must have felt just like when you expected the books you ordered to be delivered, but then they got held up and didn't arrive on time. I could understand her irritation.

"As such, I expect Master to accompany me today. We shall go shopping. We will purchase at least a thousand volumes today."

"A thousand?!"

"I am referring to ten series of titles that number over a hundred volumes. It is not very much, numerically speaking."

Wait, huh? Really? Come to think of it... When I consider there's definitely more than ten manga series that have over a hundred volumes in my old world, it really doesn't seem that odd.

I didn't have any pressing matters to attend that day, so I didn't mind going shopping. *Isn't this the first time Fam will be leaving the Library, though?*

"I see. Impressive, Fam. You get to go on a date with Master. I cannot let this chance pass by. I will be accompanying you as well, Master."

"Huh? No way, you're coming too...?"

I've got a bad feeling about all this...

"Ah, so I alone do not satisfy you. Very well then, let us call the sisters."

"Hold up. That'll only make more of a mess, so please don't."

"I am afraid you are too late. So long as we are in Babylon, we are continually in-link, sharing any information regarding you, Master. The sisters have already been informed." *What kind of system is that?! I'm getting kind of scared, here!*

"It seems the Tower's Noel and the Rampart's Liora have abstained from participating. The Alchemy Lab's Flora is also too busy

at the moment.” Fam was already confirming the sisters’ attendance from the terminal on top of her desk.

Wait, you decided already? Noel probably just said she’s too sleepy, and Liora got stuck taking care of her. Flora should be making that drug Duke Ortlinde asked for the other day.

If you think about it, it makes perfect sense for nobility and royalty to be that occupied with producing heirs. They have second or third wives, even mistresses if need be, because there’s no real future for them without an heir. In other words, that drug is something that’s desperately sought after by nobility and royalty alike.

That being the case, I knew it wouldn’t hurt to have more of it on hand, so I asked Flora to produce some more the day before. As a matter of fact, the Emperor of Regulus asked for some, too. But it wasn’t for him. It was for his son, Prince Lux.

Lux didn’t have any children, after all... It was a grave affair for the Regulus Empire.

As I was pondering that, Rosetta, Monica, and Parshe all appeared in the Library’s teleportation circle.

“Are we going out, sir?! That’ll make for a good change of pace, sir yessir!”

“Get me like, something totally yummy to eat, Master.”

“It’s-a been too long since I hit-a the surface world. This should be lots of fun.”

Fam, Cesca, Rosetta, Monica and Parshe... Am I going to have to take all five of them out? Makes me feel like a teacher taking a kindergarten out on a field trip. I hope nothing bad happens...

“Let us begin by purchasing everything from this shelf all the way to that shelf.”

“Everything?!”

I took them to a large book store in Belfast, and Fam said that all of sudden. She preferred to read storybooks and technical manuals. She also read things like self-help books, pictures books, and dictionaries, but didn’t seem to like them as much.

The shelf was packed with story books, historical tomes, travel journals, and magic theory books. The Library probably had much more advanced books on magic theory, though.

Either way, the books Fam asked for piled up on the counter. The girl at the counter looked at the sight wide-eyed, but when Fam placed a platinum coin on the counter, she immediately smiled at her like she would at an honored guest and began pricing the books with a grin.

Books were extremely valuable in this world. They were fairly expensive, so the commoners rarely got a chance to buy them. Since most of their patrons were nobles, book shops tended to be heavily

secured, and being as suspicious as we were, the guards' attention was fixed on us. *We're paying. Relax!*

"Master, Master. I have found this lovemaking manual, The Garma Sudra. Could you purchase it and try it out on me?"

"Put it back!" I drove away Cesca, who ran up to me with a dubious pink book in her hands.

The Babylon sisters all accompanied me in their maid uniforms. They stuck out like sore thumbs. Maid outfits were hardly subtle, after all.

"I've collected what I wanted from here. Master, let us continue."

"You're buying more...?" Fam seemed to be in a good mood. Her expression was as blank as it ever was, but her gestures felt more lively, somehow. *She skipped just now, didn't she?* Seeing her do that with her blank look was a bit creepy.

Having paid for the books and received our change, I packed the books into my **[Storage]** and we moved on. When I looked to the side, I noticed that Cesca had managed to sneakily purchase that sex manual. She worked in the castle as a maid, so I paid her a wage, of course. It was no surprise she had money on her, but that book was fairly expensive... I wondered if it was okay to let her do that.

"Master. I say that if what's bothering you is the price, buy it. But give it up if what's making you buy it is the price."

Geez, no need to be so smug. I didn't even say anything! Anyway, she was free to use her money however she pleased. I simply kept quiet.

Rosetta and Monica didn't seem interested in the books at all. I looked over dubiously at Parshe, who picked up a book related to architecture. If that klutz were to knock over a shelf, things would turn very ugly.

"Alright, let's check out the book store in the imperial capital, then." After we left the shop, I opened a **[Gate]** in an alleyway to Regulus' imperial capital, Gallaria.

From there we went to Refreese's capital, Bern, Mismede's capital, Berge, Ramissh's capital, Isla, Lihnea's capital, Nimue, the Roadmare Union's central capital, Paneramea, Lestia's capital, Lestin, and Felsen's capital, Pharma. We went from country to country, buying every single book Fam specified. I'm pretty sure we bought well over a thousand books.

"Master, I'm getting hungry and stuff... Feed me, if you could." As we walked along the streets of Felsen's capital, Monica whispered with a tired expression, contrasting Fam's brisk, albeit expressionless, gait.

"I've been well fed ever since I've entered your service, Master. So like, skipping meals for the first time in a while and stuff is totally taking its toll on me."

"Well fed... It's just ordinary food, you know?" Strictly speaking,

the sisters could generate energy from magic and light, so they didn't need to eat for sustenance.

However, I thought working them to the bone and not giving them anything to eat would be terribly cruel, so I'd been providing them with the same meals we had. They could still ingest food, and could discern what tasted good and what didn't, so they each gradually developed their own tastes in cuisine.

"It was pretty bad when we were working with Doctor Babylon... All we had to eat were calorie bars and liquid food."

"That was-a pretty unpleasant..." Rosetta and Parshe spoke heartily.

So that's how she treated them... It feels a bit heartless of her.

"No, it was the doctor that didn't have any interest in food whatsoever, sir! She was the kind of person who always said anything was fine so long as it quelled her hunger, yessir she did. She didn't want to waste time on eating, so she had only one meal a day. There was even a time where she tried to live off Flora's pills."

"And we had-a to have the same diet she did. After all, only Cesca and Liora can-a cook."

"Just because we could doesn't mean we were ever motivated to. No matter what we'd make, the professor would always say it was just okay."

"She was a problematic person to live with, wasn't she...?"

Hearing that made me feel bad for them, so since we were in Felsen I took them to a nice restaurant. It was a stylish little place. They didn't demand a dress code, so we entered no problem.

They handed us a menu and took our orders, and soon enough the table was stacked with delicacies.

"It's delicious! Delicious I say!"

"I get it, I get it. Settle down and eat already." I answered Monica with a wry smile as she chomped on a mouthful of meat. While I was pondering how lucky I was to catch a seat near the table's edge, a steak the size of a sandal slapped onto the side of my face with a splatter.

"Ow!"

"Ahaaa, I'm-a sorry! I keep-a trying, but the steak! She cannot be cut!" Parshe, who was sitting opposite of me, apologized as she tore the steak off my face and put it back on her plate.

That clumsy little... She isn't doing this on purpose, is she? Earlier she said "allow me" and poured a whole salt shaker's worth of salt into my salad.

"Parshe isn't at fault here, sir! It's just how she is. Please allow me to drop and give you twenty in her stead, sir!" Rosetta, who was sitting next to me, offered a black handkerchief. That was considerate

of her. I took it and begin wiping off the sauce that clung to my face and... immediately noticed a weird smell. I spread the handkerchief and find that it wasn't an handkerchief, but an oily rag.

"Oh? Where'd I put the handkerchief while I was changing, again?"

Rosetta began rummaging through the pockets of her maid uniform, while I silently pulled a wet towel out of **[Storage]** and used it to wipe the sauce and oil from my face. Being around them was exhausting...

Incidentally, Fam just started reading the books she bought earlier, and hadn't touched her food at all.

"It's going to go cold, you know?"

"There is no reason for concern. It is still perfectly edible when cold."

This girl... The least you can do is take your eyes off the book when you're talking to me.

Why is her personality like that? Oh, come to think of it...

"Your personalities are partially based off of Doctor Babylon's, right?"

"That's right, sir! The professor divided her personality, and granted each of us an emotion to serve as our core. I myself have the professor's urge to create as my core, sir!"

I see... The professor's desire to "create things" is the emotion at Rosetta's core.

I glanced at Fam, who was still engrossed in her book.

"So that means Fam is..."

"Intellectual thirst."

That made sense. The desire to "know many things" was the basis for Fam's heart.

"Parshe's is 'ambition' and Monica's is 'sincerity.'" Parshe and ambition... Well, I guess she never gives up no matter how many times she screws up. And Monica is sincerity. Well, she really is honest. Both to others and to herself.

I turned my eyes to the perverted maid, who kept panting while zealously reading the sex manual she'd bought.

"I take it she's lust or carnal desire..."

"To be exact, hers is curiosity... I believe that choice of words would be far less objectionable..." Even Rosetta looked somewhat taken aback by Cesca's behavior.

Incidentally, Flora's was "devotion," Noel's was "sleepiness," and Liora's was "compassion."

That crazy doctor actually had devotion and compassion for others...? Of course, the sisters aren't all made up by single emotions. Other various emotions that splintered off from the professor surround their

cores, and each of them developed their own personalities.

“So Doctor Babylon is like the sum of all of you, or your basis... She sounds like a truly impressive person.”

“If she were a bit more normal, sir! She would have surely left her mark upon history. However, as she was prone to mood swings and didn’t care at all for fame or reputation, there were hardly any people she could consider a friend, no sir.”

She was a loner, then... I suppose given her personality, no one would have gone out of their way to get involved with her.

“There were those foolish nobles that kept bothering the professor for her inventions. But she like, totally taught them a lesson and stuff.”

“That brings-a back memories. She had them all tied up naked to-a the palace pillars.”

“Yes, they were upside down, too. That was totally awesome, hah...”

...Huh? I’m getting deja-vu for some reason. Am I imagining things? But she sure did some nasty things in the past. Pretty scary, to be honest.

“By the way, there was one more part to Babylon... the Research Laboratory. What’s the person who manages it like?”

They have part of the professor’s personality, so that alone should make them abnormal. In that case, I should probably learn what kind of person they are.

“I don’t like her.” Monica said flatly, chewing on her meat. *Weird. I never expected to hear Monica talk like that about someone.*

“That’s because the Research Laboratory’s manager likes to pamper Monica, sir!”

“Isn’t that a good thing?”

“It’s like, totally annoying and stuff, you know...? She keeps trying to hug me. I can’t stand it when people stick to me like glue.”

“The Research Laboratory’s terminal gynoid is-a hard-working and-a responsible, though. She worked often as-a the professor’s assistant. She was also in charge of-a providing maintenance for our bodies.” Parshe answered, finally successfully cutting off a piece of meat from her steak.

Serious and hard-working, huh... Maybe it’ll be fine, then... Liora, Rosetta, and Monica are on the diligent side too, but they each have their own issues.

“The Research Laboratory’s gynoid helped-a the professor on many of her experiments. She even helped in making most of-a us, with the exception of Liora and Flora. She’s the third sister, after all.”

The third sister, huh? Each Sister had a number assigned to them. If I recalled properly it went something like:

#20 - Preliora

#21 - Bell Flora
#22 - ???
#23 - Francesca
#24 - Irisfam
#25 - Pamela Noel
#26 - Lileleparshe
#27 - High Rosetta
#28 - Fredmonica

That sounded about right.

“Aren’t there any units from before Liora’s time?”

“There were, but all the ones before number eighteen were animal types, and numbers eighteen and nineteen were made to be short-lived, unlike us.”

“I see...”

It’s a story from five-thousand years ago. I can’t blame them. I guess she must have used special cells to grant these girls their longevity, then. They’re a cross between a magical life-form and machine, after all.

“Hmm, but wasn’t there a numbered capsule after mine in the Research Laboratory? Number Twenty-Nine, right? I was looking forward to someone being newer than me, but Babylon got like, totally split up and stuff before she woke up... What happened to that?”

“There was a capsule there, but it was empty.”

“Maybe it was-a spare?”

“You think? There were lots of capsules in the Research Laboratory... Why like, totally go to the trouble of putting a number on it and stuff for no reason?”

“Maybe the professor was thinking of making us a new sister!”

“A new-a little sister... I hope-a she’s in the Research Laboratory.” The three of them were getting worked up, but I turned my gaze to Cesca and Fam, who were still immersed in reading.

I wonder why they’re not taking part in the conversation... They shouldn’t be reading all the time. Well, one of them is reading a dirty book, too...

They had me follow them around all day, but it honestly wasn’t so bad every once in a while.

Still, the day’s events reminded me that there was one more Babylon left to find. We found the Frame Gears, so I wasn’t sure if we needed much more, but if their sisters were out there, then I wanted to help them meet. Being alone was pretty sad, after all. And there was even a chance for two more to be at the Research Laboratory.

As I wondered just who I’d wind up meeting next, I quietly sipped my juice.

Afterword

And here we are again, at the end of the ninth In Another World With My Smartphone volume. It's me, as usual, Patora Fuyuhara.

Nine already, wow... Means we'll be at ten next. This is all thanks to you guys, honestly. You just keep reading!

It's taken over two years to get to this point, but I'm amazed... I didn't even think we'd sell enough to get more than one volume, let alone ten. There were a lot of things going on at the time of the original publication offer, so I was even leaning toward saying no. In the end, I'm really glad I made the choice to go ahead.

To me, the highlight of the volume is the new Frame Gears that finally got to appear. When I was writing my webnovel, I didn't really think all that much about pacing or artistic design spacing, either... so having multiple Frame Gears at once is a little harsh on the mecha designer. Please forgive me, Mr. Ogasawara!

We're gonna see the special Frame Gears for Yumina and the other fiancées show up one after another, now. Hm? You wanna know when Touya's shows up? Now, now... Ladies first. Hm...

I wrote an interlude chapter for this volume about the Babylon girls, which was a nice change of pace. I actually did this to make it up to Fam, since I rushed through the Library sequence initially, and she never got a proper illustration done of her. So naturally, the illustration for the interlude was one of Fam. Touya's apologizing to her into the picture, but consider that as me apologizing to her for not getting her drawn until so late in the game. Sorry it took so long, Fam.

I'll pay more attention so things like that don't happen in the future. I promise!

In the next volume, we'll finally find that Research Laboratory and unite Babylon to its full and final form. In a sense, you'll also meet the most wicked character in the series... But hey, spoilers.

The story's gonna have a lot of interesting and wild twists from here on out, too.

Also, the anime! A lot of information about the show was revealed as I was writing this volume.

The voice actors were confirmed, and the character theme songs were previewed. They began recording the tracks a while ago, I think.

The animators, voice actors, director, and all the other amazing staff members are breathing life into my work. It's honestly

unbelievable.

I find it funny that a little story I started writing on my smartphone has changed hands and taken this new form.

Actually I'm currently writing this after just coming home from a production presentation about the anime. Everyone involved was so upbeat. I'm really happy. I'm really looking forward to seeing it all come together.

It's airing soon, I think. Look on the website for more details.

Anyway, time to give my usual thanks.

Thanks as always for your wonderful illustrations, Eiji Usatsuka. There are a lot of characters now, and a lot more to come. I can't wait to see your take on them.

Tomofumi Ogasawara, thank you for going above and beyond and designing multiple new Frame Gears this volume. You're a real lifesaver. There probably won't be any new Frame Gears next volume, so you can rest easy.

And, as always, to K. Thanks for helping so much with the anime details, and working so damn hard all the time. I'll do my best to work with you.

To everyone at Hobby Japan's Editorial Department, and everyone involved with this book's production... a huge thank you.

And, of course, thank you to my readers, and everyone who's been following my webnovel release on Shousetsuka ni Narou. I hope you're looking forward to the anime.

Well, as always, it's now time to say goodbye. May we meet again in volume ten.

Patora Fuyuhara

Bonus Short Stories

With My Smartphone

“Local High School Student Killed In Freak Lightning Strike.”

I came across an article with that title. That fifteen-year-old highschooler, Mochizuki Touya, was me.

By all rights, it should’ve been a horribly tragic accident, but the wording of the article just seemed pretty bland.

Old Man God told me that he brought my body up to the God Realm just as I was about to be cremated. The remains in the urn back home were a fake he switched out. Hearing that made me feel sorry for my parents.

I died. I traveled to the world beyond. Still, I was free to live in this world. Even if I was trapped here, I could still browse on my smartphone. I could watch my favorite shows every week, too. Plus, my smartphone appeared to have infinite credit.

It was a service from God, but apparently I was still using a standard data provider. God just had the money transferred regularly. I could use the phone to make calls, but my only available contact was God. That seemed fair, though. I was dead back home, so if I started calling, then my family would be upset.

I could read articles online, and watch any shows I wanted online... However, no calls or e-mails were permitted, and I couldn’t post on forums, either.

Still, it was quite the useful little tool. Information’s the strongest weapon, after all. He who controls the information controls the world.

Also, my Smartphone seemed to automatically update itself. Whenever the developers released a new model back home, my phone slowly morphed into it. I guess you could say it evolves? I noticed it getting thinner recently, though. Wasn’t sure what was up with that.

Still, it was a gift from God, so I didn’t really need to ask any questions. After all, it was thanks to him that I was doing so well in the new world.

“Something wrong, Touya?”

“I’m fine, it’s just a little early. Heading over to the guild?”

“Yup. Hope there’s some good quests.”

“If you finish early, wanna grab something to eat?”

“Alright! Let’s do that!”

I turned off my smartphone as I answered that question, thinking

that I was going to do my best once more on this sunny day.

All the while, I felt the comforting feeling of the reliable friend in my breast pocket as I headed off to make my rounds.

The Maid's Morning

It was early in the morning, but that didn't deter Francesca's actions. She was the Terminal Gynoid of the garden, and Babylon Number 23.

She woke up at the same time every day. Gynoids didn't need to sleep, but she still did. Some of the sisters slept for quite a while, in fact. After that, she worked as a maid, so she often came down from the garden to inspect the various rooms in Brunhild Castle.

On one fine day, Cesca woke up at her usual time in order to begin her work.

"Today I'm gonna try a high-class approach..."

It wasn't a huge deal. Just some lacy underwear. The boy she referred to as Master was owed a little teasing.

Cesca had a fine selection of panties. But today, she was wearing simple white lingerie with lacy bits. She was confident in her womanly charms.

After Cesca finished changing into her maid uniform, it was time to head down to the castle.

"Oh, Cesca. Mooorning."

"Good morning."

At the entrance hall, Cesca was greeted by a girl who wore a pink bow. It was Ripple, the living painting that acted as Brunhild Castle's security system. She was originally an artifact created by Doctor Babylon herself, which kind of made her a cousin to the gynoids.

"Any problems last night?"

"Nothing at aaaaaaall."

Cesca gave a little nod, then produced her cleaning supplies. Following that, she began to clean up the entry hall with considerable speed.

When she finished, she headed straight into the main audience chamber, where she once again began to sweep at lightning speed, pausing only to rub down the royal throne with a thick cloth.

As she cleaned the seat, she began to rub really hard, pressing her hands lewdly down on to the chair and breathing heavily. It was clear that the idiotic perv was taking a little too much pleasure from her work.

After enjoying herself for a little while, Cesca got up and headed toward her final destination. She walked far deeper into the castle, until she reached *his* room. He'd put a key in the door to prevent

anyone coming in as he slept. However, that was a futile measure. Cesca produced a small, thin tool and inserted it into the keyhole. Then, she pushed out the key on the other side and began wiggling. Eventually, the latch opened.

Without a sound, she tiptoed into the room with the dexterity of an experienced criminal. The morning light breached the window as Cesca scuttled over to her sleeping master, as well as his unprotected face.

“Master... It’s time to get up now...” Cesca spoke very quietly. Intentionally, of course. Naturally, he didn’t respond.

“Oh gosh, Master... You’re not waking up? Maybe I should wake you up with a ■■■■■, or perhaps you’d like me to reach over and give you a □□□□?”

The boy still didn’t stir.

“You want it that bad, huh...? Alright then, I suppose I’ll service you a little...”

Cesca immediately shed her maid uniform in a matter of seconds. She looked like a quick-change magician. She was clad only in her lacy underwear as she made her way toward her slumbering master...

“I’ll just have to wake you up with my body...” Cesca brought her face close to her master’s as she said that, and their lips just barely grazed against each other. Then, the boy’s eyes opened, and Cesca was suddenly hit by the sensation of falling.

“Agh?!” She looked around in surprise, seeing that she was no longer in the same room. Once again, she had been sent away by a [Gate].

“Hehe... I got to touch his pretty little lips... Today’s gonna be a great day!” After putting an excited finger up to her lips and giggling for a bit, she headed toward her closet to grab a new maid uniform.

As always, Cesca would spend the day rushing around for the sake of the man she so dutifully served.

Big Sis’ Stuffed Toy

“What are you up to, Touya?

“Oh, Yumina? I was just thinking about what kind of toys to make for Yamato.”

“For him?” Yumina looked at the table and found a lot of little toys, mostly made out of wood. Her younger brother, Prince Yamato of Belfast, was still under a year old, so she wondered if those toys were really appropriate.

“Well, it should be fine as long as it’s something simple... What’s this?” Yumina pointed toward a strange item. It was a circular shape on a stick with two balls on a string hanging on each side. When you

turned the handle, the balls would hit against the paper skin and produce a drumming sound.

"It's a rattle drum. Heard they're popular in Eashen. Or well, something similar, at least."

"That's cute... Yamato should like that. Oh, what's this?" Yumina pointed toward what appeared to be a small ladder with angled steps.

"Oh, this..." Touya put a small square-shaped toy on top of it, and it slid down each segment before finally clattering at the bottom.

"This is lovely... But Yamato would probably eat that piece..."

"I wouldn't worry about that. When I made it, I enchanted it so it tastes really bad. Kids should spit it out right away."

Touya explained a lot of his other toys, showing various building blocks, animal-themed sets, bells on sticks, whistles, rattles, and so on.

"This is the best one!"

"Really? That?"

Yumina was referring to a stuffed toy that Touya had pulled out from his **[Storage]**. Stuffed toys existed in this world, but only members of upper class families could hope to have a cuddly toy stuffed with cotton. Lots of different types existed, but they wildly varied in quality.

"Could I... give him this?"

"Sure, I don't see why not."

Yumina happily took the stuffed animal. It had been enchanted with **[Protection]** which prevented gradual wear and tear, while also keeping dust from collecting on it.

"He's so cuuute! Thankyouuu!"

Yumina cuddled the toy with a huge smile on her face as she sang Touya's praises. He blushed a tad as he heard that.

"Try squeezing him with both hands, then."

"Huh? Alright..." Yumina squeezed the toy a little, and a voice suddenly rang out.

"Yamatoooo! It's me, Yumina, your sister!"

"...Was that your voice just now, Touya?"

"Ah, well... It was a test, you know? I was gonna have you record it properly later."

Yamato would probably have been terrified if he heard a weird man's voice coming from a present his sister gave him.

"Figured if he could hear your voice whenever he wanted, he wouldn't ever feel lonely."

"...Thanks, Touya. I'm happy you thought of that..." Yumina giggled happily.

"Well, only the best for my future brother-in-law, right?"

They spent the afternoon recording various phrases, and then delivered the "Chatty Yumina" to the little prince. Prince Yamato

ended up cherishing that toy for a long time to come.

Summers and Ghost Sightings

Summer is drawing near. What does that really mean, though? The sea? Fireworks? Watermelons? No, summer is all about ghost sightings. If you unravel my family lineage, you'll find that we're a lineage of Shinto priests. Well, at least, it *was* like that until my great-grandfather's generation. Now, I don't know if that has anything to do with what I'm about to say, but I *do* have a few ghost stories, and this time, I would like to introduce them to you...

#1:

It happened on a warm summer night. A friend and I were walking out of a convenience store, and there was a lone woman walking ahead of us.

Seems like a pretty generic situation, doesn't it? You can almost imagine her getting scared by our presence and running away. I didn't want that to happen, so I purposely slowed down, but my friend kept walking at the same pace as before, and I knew it wouldn't be long before he caught up to the woman.

Read the situation, I thought as I looked forward... and realized that the woman wasn't there anymore. It was a path without any corners or turns. There were only walls without any openings that fenced off houses.

I asked the friend where the woman went, and his reply stunned at me...

"Huh? What're you talking about? There was no one there."

Really, it made a massive chill run down my spine.

#2:

This also happened on a warm summer night. I was out for a drive with a friend of mine back then. We stopped at a red light, and when I glanced outside, I saw a cat minding its own business in some dark bushes.

It wasn't a normal cat, mind you... It was transparent. Not completely, of course. Otherwise, I wouldn't have seen it. It was transparent in the sense that it looked like it was made of glass. I could only really make out its outline and eyes. After noticing my gaze, the cat slowly vanished into the bushes. I remember the traffic signal turning green and the car starting to move while I was still petrified. Just what in the world *was* that?

#3:

This is the scariest one... Yet again, it was a warm summer night, but this time I was having trouble sleeping. Before I knew it, my body became immobile. It was sleep paralysis. My consciousness was clear,

but I couldn't move even a single finger.

My vision was strange, as well. I was actually looking down at myself as I lied down in a six tatami size room. My hazy mind figured that it might've been an out-of-body experience.

This is bad. Very bad, I thought, but my consciousness suddenly returned to my body. Still, even then, I was immobile. At best, I could only slightly open my eyes. And that's... when it happened.

While I was in bed, unable to move, I started hearing footsteps next to my ears. It sounded like the uniform march of an infantry unit.

The apartment I lived at the time was right next to a road, and there was an old military burial site not too far away.

Remembering that made a cold sweat run down my brow, but all I heard was the footsteps of many army boots. They seemed to be unaware of me, and they just passed me by while moving at the same pace.

After a period of time that felt both short and long, the footsteps grew distant and eventually faded. Eventually, I got up and realized that I was soaked in sweat. That was the first and only time I experienced sleep paralysis.

All three of those events happened when I was between 18 and 22 years old. Since then, as I grew older, such experiences became far less frequent.

Now that I've shared something like this with you, I'll have you know that I am quite a coward. I absolutely hate ghost stories, and watching horror films is impossible for me. However, even though I'm certainly relieved about the decrease in sightings, a part of me is somewhat sad.

Well, let's see what this summer brings...



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In Another World With My Smartphone: Volume 9
by Patora Fuyuhara

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